

Maundy Thursday
Matthew 26:26-28
April 1, 2010

Dear family of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

On the evening before Jesus died, our Savior gave His Holy Supper. We will celebrate that Supper, a true triple Communion, this evening and again tomorrow, Good Friday, and at our 7:00 am service on Easter Sunday. Of course, we celebrate His Sacrament regularly all the time, too.

Jesus is just as much the host of Holy Communion when His family, Christians, celebrate it today as that first time in the upper room in Jerusalem.

It is a wonderful gift to us and we want never to forget or even to take for granted how great a gift it is for us from our Savior and Redeemer.

Jesus of Nazareth is passing by: Feast with Him.

Jesus redeemed His Old Testament Israel out of physical slavery and death. Many lambs died that day. God used their deaths directly in freeing Israel from slavery and death in Egypt.

The blood of the lambs that died, applied to the frame around their doors, caused God's angel of death harmlessly to pass over their homes. The homes in which they ate the meat of those lambs, along with unleavened bread, bitter tasting herbs and, of course, wine with the meal.

The Passover Meal looked back to the day when the LORD physically rescued His Old Testament Israel. But it looked forward, too. That can be seen best in God's very specific requirements connected to the lambs. They must be male lambs. They had to be flawless, defect-free male lambs. They needed to be defect-free male lambs sacrificed in such a way that no bone was broken, whose blood poured out, whose death brought freedom from slavery and physical death for God's people. This meal also literally fed (energized) them for their first steps out of slavery on their way to the Promised Land.

Jesus purposely tied all of this to Himself and to His new meal. Matthew says, "While they were eating, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it into pieces and gave it to them saying, 'Take and eat; this is My body'."

They had been eating the Passover. Using some of that unleavened bread, Jesus gave that bread to them with His Word, "This (bread) is My body."

We can see and feel and even taste the bread. It is real bread that we eat. St. Paul says that, too. "When you eat the bread..." he says repeatedly.

We don't see or feel or taste the other thing we eat. "This is My body." But we hear Jesus' Word. Jesus gives us His real body, the body He was born with, the body that suffered; the body that died on the cross, but also the body that would be raised to glorious life on Easter Sunday. It is the body of Jesus connected to Jesus' divine nature, in one person, true, eternal, almighty God, the Son, in the flesh.

Who Jesus is gives us all the explanation we need. It is a miracle. We'll never be able to grasp the 'How' of it. It is a miracle done by almighty God. Jesus is the Truth. Jesus is the Faithful Witness. Jesus is the Light of the world in whom there is no darkness at all. Most importantly, Jesus is our Savior, the One who loves us, who by His life and death earned for us, won for us poor sinners, forgiveness of sin, new life, spiritual life and eternal, glorious living with Him in heaven. We trust His Word!

This is the New Covenant, the New Testament.

Our New Testament meal also looks back to when Jesus earned all of these blessings for us. But it also looks to the present when Jesus brings all the blessings of His work on our behalf to us. He brings freedom from sin and from our slavery to sin. He brings His freedom from death, both in new spiritual living by new birth, and with a new created nature, and in actual future resurrection and eternal life, body and soul, with Jesus in heaven.

We believe and also participate in this covenant, this will and testament of our Lord when we drink the wine because it is His blood. "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." It's Jesus' giving His blood, in death, that took all the punishment due all sin to Himself away from us. The Prophet Jeremiah and the Apostle Paul also emphasize forgiveness as the essence of this new covenant. Jeremiah says, "This is the covenant I will make ... I will be their God and they will be my people ... For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sin no more." And the Apostle wrote, "This is My covenant with them when I take away their sins." Isaiah and the Book of Hebrews also teach these things about the covenant.

By eating and drinking this Supper, we eat and drink our Savior's body and blood, which He gave for us. By faith in His words, we also receive the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is what created us new. Forgiveness makes eternal life ours. The triple communion of Jesus' Supper is (1) the communion between the bread and wine and Jesus' body and blood; (2) the communion between believers and Jesus Christ; (3) the communion between all who believe Jesus' words.

This Supper nourishes our spiritual life by feeding our Christian faith. It enables us to continue on our journey through this wilderness life on our way to the promised land of eternal life.

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So, Jesus' Holy Communion also points us to our future when we, together with every other believer in heaven, will eat the awesome fellowship meal with Jesus in heaven, the marriage feast of the Lamb. This miracle of the Lord's Supper is a preview of that future supper. How awesome that meal will be! Jesus of Nazareth is passing by: Feast with Him!

Amen!