

Sermon for April 17, 2025 – Maundy Thursday

Luke 22:7-20

Theme: The Lord prepares a special Supper

- 1) It is a meal of remembrance
- 2) It is a promise of salvation

⁷The day of Unleavened Bread arrived, when it was necessary to sacrifice the Passover lamb. ⁸Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it.”

⁹They said to him, “Where do you want us to prepare it?”

¹⁰He told them, “Just as you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters. ¹¹Tell the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?”’ ¹²He will show you a large, furnished upper room. Make preparations there.” ¹³They went and found things just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴When the hour had come, Jesus reclined at the table with the twelve apostles. ¹⁵He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, ¹⁶for I tell you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁷He took a cup, gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves, ¹⁸for I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰In the same way, he took the cup after the supper, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is being poured out for you.

Why do you partake of Holy Communion? Are you seeking to dedicate yourself to God? Or do you participate in the Lord’s Supper because it’s a part of Christian tradition, or simply because everyone else does it, so you should too?

I hope these aren’t your reasons. Communion is neither an act of “dedication” nor a mere tradition of Christianity. The Bible tells us that the Lord’s Supper is a special meal in which Jesus offers us the same body and blood He sacrificed on the cross to forgive our sins. It is a meal of remembrance that unites us with Jesus and each other in such an intimate way that it defies all human comprehension.

As we celebrate Jesus’ institution of the Lord’s Supper this evening, let us recall what we receive in it, under the theme: **The Lord prepares a special Supper.** 1) It is a meal of remembrance. 2) It is a promise of salvation.

Part One: It is a meal of remembrance.

Our sermon text begins with Jesus sending Peter and John into Jerusalem to make preparations to celebrate the Passover. “What is the Passover?” you might wonder. Like the Lord’s Supper, it was a meal of remembrance.

The LORD instituted the Old Testament Passover meal for Israel shortly before delivering them from their enslavement in Egypt. God had sent nine devastating plagues upon Egypt, but Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let God’s people go. Therefore, the LORD threatened one final plague that would finally break Pharaoh’s stubbornness: He would send an angel of death to strike down the firstborn of every man and animal in Egypt. Only those who found refuge under the blood of the Passover Lamb would be saved.

To ensure their salvation, the LORD commanded each Israelite household to slaughter a perfect, year-old lamb and paint its blood on the doorposts of their houses. They were to prepare this Passover Lamb in a special way and eat it all before morning, ready to leave Egypt at a moment’s notice.

Every Egyptian firstborn died that night, but the LORD’s angel of death passed over the houses of His people that had the Lamb’s blood on the doorpost. A broken Pharaoh finally let God’s people go in the morning.

The Lord didn’t want the Israelites to forget their deliverance, so He commanded them to celebrate the Passover meal every year. It was not only a remembrance of His past faithfulness but also a picture of how He would deliver His people from a greater enslavement in the future: our slavery to sin, death, and the power of the devil.

Yes, the LORD intended the Passover Lamb to foreshadow Jesus, *the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*¹ Consider the similarities: every Passover Lamb had to be perfect, and Jesus was perfect, without sin! Like the Passover Lamb, Jesus was sacrificed for the deliverance of God’s people. And, as the Israelites found refuge from the angel of death under the blood of the Passover lamb, so we find refuge from everlasting death in hell through faith in the blood Jesus shed on the cross for our forgiveness.

That is why Jesus instituted a new memorial meal while celebrating the Passover with His disciples: a meal meant for all believers in Christ from every ethnic background to celebrate how Jesus delivered them from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

We read: ¹⁹*He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”*

The first thing we notice is that Jesus, after taking the bread, gave thanks. Even though the Bible does not tell us the words Jesus prayed, they were, nevertheless, very important. How so? Because Jesus’ prayer is what turned a simple meal of bread and wine into the Sacrament we celebrate today: a sacred meal in which He offers believers his true body and blood, along with the bread and wine, for the forgiveness of sins.

As Jesus distributed the bread to His disciples, notice that He doesn't say, "This symbolizes my body," or "Think about my body." Instead, He says, "*This is my body, which is given for you.*" In, with, and under the bread Jesus broke was the very body that, in a few hours, He would sacrifice for the sins of the world. And, just as the Old Testament Jews ate the Passover lambs that were sacrificed to save them from death, God wants us to eat the Lamb of God, whose sacrifice saves us from everlasting death in hell.

Because of how essential Jesus' sacrifice is for our salvation, He says, "*Do this (celebrate this meal) in remembrance of me.*"

Jesus wants us continually to commemorate His sacrifice for our salvation by partaking of this meal, trusting that Jesus accomplished everything the Bible said He would accomplish. He wants us continually to turn to Him in repentance and faith. Why? So, we don't lose our salvation by chasing after the things of this world. He knows how the devil tempts us by filling our minds with earthly worries and fleshly desires. After we fall, Satan does his best to fill us with such shame that we imagine that God won't forgive us, and that we must work out our own salvation in some way.

That is why the Bible urges Christians to partake of Holy Communion often. Why? To receive the assurance of His forgiveness and love as we receive the very body and blood He used on the cross to reconcile us to God.

Because Jesus gives us His precious body and blood in Holy Communion, He doesn't want us to partake of His sacrament mindlessly. Instead, He wants us to prepare. How? By repenting of all our sins and turning to Him in faith. He commands us to think about what we are receiving: not just bread and wine, but the actual body and blood that was crucified in our place. He wants us to remember what he cried out from the cross: "It is finished": all our sins have been paid in full! The proof of this fact is Jesus' resurrection on Easter morning.

Just think: in Holy Communion, we aren't receiving dead flesh and lifeless blood, but the resurrected body and living blood of Jesus. In other words, we receive Christ himself: our almighty God and Saviour! Covered by His blood and righteousness, the threat of everlasting death passes us by. Yes, the LORD's Supper truly is a special meal of remembrance. More than that, it is His promise of salvation.

Part Two: It is a meal that promises salvation

Our sermon text continues: ²⁰*In the same way, he took the cup after the supper. "After blessing the wine as he did the bread,"ⁱⁱ Jesus said. This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is being poured out for you.*

What does Jesus mean by calling this cup the *new testament*, and how does it differ from the *old testament*? A testament, or covenant, is a legal promise to do something and (in Old Testament times) was almost always established through some sort of sacrifice involving blood.

The Old Testament covenant was the promise God made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai that He would be their God and protect them as long as they were careful to obey all of His commands. The Israelites, however, were unable to faithfully obey His Law. No person can because humanity is that sinful. This is why, already in Old Testament times, the LORD promised to make a new, one-sided legal promise with His people. In this covenant, He would not demand anything; He would simply promise to be their God and forgive the sins of everyone who looked to Him in repentant faith.

The Holy Spirit inspired the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah to write about this future covenant: *³¹Yes, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, although I was a husband to them, declares the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD. I will put my law in their minds, and I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴No longer will each one teach his neighbor, or each one teach his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD, for I will forgive their guilt, and I will remember their sins no more.* ⁱⁱⁱ

Since God's law says that there can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood,^{iv} Jesus had to shed his blood on the cross for God's new covenant of forgiveness to become effective. And that is what Jesus did, once and for all, for the forgiveness of our sins. The blood we receive in Holy Communion is a token of both Jesus' sacrifice and God's New Testament promise of our salvation. Through faith in Jesus, we can approach the LORD in freedom and confidence, knowing that we are at peace with him because his blood has atoned for our sins. Our salvation is secure!

Dear Christian. Look at the special meal your Saviour prepares for you. It is a meal of remembrance. It is a promise of salvation. The LORD guarantees his New Testament promise of forgiveness by giving us the very body and blood he used on the cross to win our salvation. With such assurance, we can live our earthly life in the peace of Christ's forgiveness, confident of His love and promise to deliver us to everlasting life with Him in paradise on the Last Day. Amen.

ⁱ John 1:29 EHV

ⁱⁱ Cf. Matthew 26:27

ⁱⁱⁱ Jeremiah 31:31-24 EHV

^{iv} Cf. Hebrews 9:22