

This is the New Covenant

Maundy Thursday – 04/14/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 22:1-27 Pastor Keith Besel

v.20, [Jesus “took”] **“...the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood’.”**

Introduction

✘ Some would say that St. Luke officially begins his account of our Lord Jesus’ Passion with the following words in verse one of our text this evening, “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover”.

→ We heard of the LORD’s institution of the very first Passover in Egypt in our Old Testament Reading earlier; how the LORD saw fit to use the smearing of blood on the doorway of His people’s homes, as a means by which the LORD would “pass over” their homes and spare those inside from the final plague that brought death to the first born of all who refused to confess the LORD as the one true God.

✘ On that night the LORD directed the people that “All the congregation of Israel shall keep [the Passover]” (Ex. 12:47), partaking of the ceremonial meal every year to remember how “the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt” (Ex. 12:51), out of slavery to Pharaoh to make them His Covenant people.

→ Now, at the time of Jesus, it has been around 1,475 years since that first Passover, and they are still gathering and celebrating with the sacred meal each year. This year however, as the Passover was drawing near, the chief priests and scribes were preparing to kill, not only the Paschal lamb, but Jesus as well. They have had enough of His teaching and miracles and they could no longer put up with His claim to be the Son of God; the promised Messiah in the flesh.

✘ And as we hear in verses 3-6, even as the rest of Jesus’ disciples were preparing to kill the Paschal lamb for the meal, Satan was preparing Judas, who was preparing himself to betray Jesus.

→ We know, of course that they all succeeded. The chief priests and scribes, Satan, and Judas succeeded in killing Jesus; in killing God. The Twelve succeeded in a celebration of the Passover that we now know surpassed anything they could have ever imagined.

✘ This particular Passover began like any other Passover the apostles had observed for so many years, since they were young children. But what Began as just another Passover meal, we learn tonight, would become what we now revere and celebrate often as the Lord’s Supper; the fulfillment of the Passover.

→ But even more, Jesus teaches us that at this Last Supper with His disciples He would institute a New Covenant in His blood; a covenant through which He would – and still to this day continues to convey the forgiveness of sins to His people by His grace.

→ It’s Thursday evening, and this Son of God would soon go to His death as the uncomplaining Passover Lamb, shedding His holy precious, divine blood as payment for the sins of the entire world.

→ It boggles the mind to think that right before the disciples’ eyes, the Lamb on the table became the Lamb reclining at the table – hosting the meal; the One who would very soon become the sacrificial Lamb on the cross.

I. Judas at the Last Supper

- ⊗ Inquiring minds often asked, what are we to make of Judas and his presence at the Last Supper? It's true that he was at the "last Passover" and the first Lord's Supper, but precisely when he left and whether he actually received the body and blood of Christ is unclear.
 - ➔ What is clear is that Jesus ate with sinners throughout His earthly ministry. So even if Judas was not there for the very first occurrence of the Sacrament, Jesus still ate with sinners on that night in which He was betrayed. In fact friends, He hosts sinners at His table still today with the same invitation: "Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the (New) Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:27–28).
- ⊗ Scripture also clearly tells us that after the meal Judas went out and hanged himself. What's so tragic is that it didn't have to happen. I mean, he did the wrong thing in betraying Jesus; it's possible he did the worst thing anyone has ever done since the fall of Adam and Eve.
 - ➔ But it ended up being the "right thing," in the sense that, as a result, Jesus died on the cross to pay for all sins, including that worst sin committed by Judas. So, it didn't have to end as it did for Judas.
 - ➔ Matthew 27:3-5 tells us: "When Judas, His betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, He [was seized with remorse] and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' They said, 'What is that to us? See to it yourself.' And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and went and hanged himself".
- ⊗ Judas went to the temple ... and he confessed his sin. The temple was precisely the right place to go. God's place of presence; His house is where you and I go for the forgiveness of sins, isn't it? But the priests refused to hear his confession and absolve his sins. Imagine for a moment that you're a pastor and someone comes to you with deep contrition and confesses a heinous sin, and rather than pronouncing God's forgiveness, you say, "What is that to me? See to it yourself," and you send him away to dwell upon his despair and hopelessness.

II. We do not merely reenact the Passover

- ⊗ As we read the Scriptural accounts of these things connected to Jesus' Passion, it's important that we understand that they are read here, within the historic liturgy of God's Church.
 - ➔ These are not just your average heart-moving stories or examples that inspire us to personal kindness and good works. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night in which He was betrayed, and when He instituted the Office of Holy Ministry with Confession and Holy Absolution three days later on the evening of His resurrection, He also gave His Church the basic framework for what we call Christian worship.
 - ➔ The most accurate word to describe it is "Contemporary" Worship, because you see, the word "contemporary" literally means, "having direct application to the present". Jesus promises us that He is present with us now – right now in worship – whether the year is 30AD or 2022AD, bestowing upon us the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. So, all faithful, Scriptural liturgy is actually "contemporary" because it is in the Liturgy that Jesus is truly present among His people, dispensing and filling them with His gifts of grace.
- ⊗ The point is that it is one thing to read "about" the Passover meal, whether it is the one in Exodus or the one with Jesus and His disciples. It's even very helpful and meaningful to reenact in some way the Passover Seder meal as we did this last Sunday evening so that we can understand the context in which Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

→ But, we should never do so in such a manner that we confuse the activity connected to the Old Covenant Passover with that of the New Covenant Sacrament of the Altar. Why? Because they are two completely different things. There are some people and churches that have done this by reenacting the Passover meal for example, on Maundy Thursday, in the same service where they say that they are receiving Holy Communion.

→ But that's like comparing an NFL football game to a lecture on brain surgery at a medical school. One is exciting. One is dry and intellectually challenging. One can cause brain damage, the other can save your life from a brain injury. Both have their place. Sports and movies and reenactments are for entertainment. They are watched in a group or alone and with popcorn and a cold drink in your hand.

→ The Bible however was written by and for the Church. It was written to be heard with others. It can and should be read at home for personal growth and edification. But its first and most important place is as the foundation of the worship liturgy. Holy Scripture does not just stand alone. Instead it shapes the liturgy with the living Word and it brings us into the very presence of God. It tells us what Jesus has to say to us today by letting Him say it. And here, through the liturgy of worship, we enter into the text, where the very presence of the living God comes into our midst and enters into us.

III. The Fulfillment of Passover Gives Forgiveness

✘ This is only made possible because of what Jesus tells us He is doing there in the Upper Room that night with His disciples. In verse 20 Jesus takes up the third of four cups in the Passover meal, the one that was historically called "The Cup of Redemption".

→ This cup came in the ceremony after the full meal had already been eaten by the family. It was with this cup, "after supper", that God's promise, or covenant originally made with Abraham, is now renewed with His people in Exodus 6:6 and is proclaimed each year at Passover as the cup is consumed. They say God's promise, "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm", and then they drink the cup.

✘ Now on this night Jesus lifted up the Cup of Redemption, and brought an entirely new and different meaning to God's promise of redeeming His people with an outstretched arm, by saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the New Covenant in My blood".

→ As we know, that very night, Jesus was arrested and the sacrifice of the Son of God as the Lamb of God was underway. Through the night and early the next day, His body was progressively broken open by scourging, thorns, nails and a spear so that His blood was "poured out" in payment for the guilt of every sin ever committed by every man, women and child ever to reside on this earth. It literally was "with [the] outstretched arm[s]" of Jesus, nailed to the cross, that God "redeemed you" and me from the condemnation we deserved; from our slavery to sin; and from eternal death and separation in hell.

→ This is how Jesus fulfilled God's Covenant of redemption to His people at the Exodus. It was now completed. There was no need to eat the Passover meal ever again. Nothing more needed to be done – it was all "finished". Jesus did it all, which is why He institutes a completely "New Covenant" from that day forward. The only remaining benefit to the old Passover Meal was as a lesson to teach us of the background for the New Covenant; the New and different meal that He put in place as a foundation for today's Christian Worship!

✘ And Jesus keeps this covenant always "contemporary" by using the present tense verb to describe His presence, "This is My body which is given for you." "This cup...is the new covenant in My blood" (vv. 19-20).

→ When you and I receive the Lord's Supper in the context of His worship liturgy, it is so much more than just a reenactment or a symbolic act of remembering our Savior's saving work for us on the cross! Jesus tells us it is His true body and blood; the very same body and blood broken and shed on the cross for us 2000 years ago. It is Jesus coming to us in His very real presence, here and now today; coming into us each time He is placed upon our tongues with the direct, contemporary assurance that the "New Covenant" is just as new and certain today as it was the day He first gave it to His disciples in the Upper Room.

✘ It is Jesus' very own, personal assurance dear Christians that, as you come here to His temple and you confess, "I have sinned". "I, a poor miserable sinner, confess unto you all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended you and justly deserve your temporal and eternal punishment", that Jesus promises you the pastor will not say to you, "What is this to me? See to it yourself".

→ No, instead you will hear the pastor, whom the Lord has commanded and given the authority to say – in fact, he is under divine orders to say as God's mouthpiece, "I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit".

→ Be assured dear believers – that is not my promise or my covenant. It is Jesus' promise to you each time you come here to His table. It is the *New Covenant*, today, this Sunday and until Jesus takes you to His eternal feast in heaven. For it is given to you in the name of Jesus. Amen.