

St. John's Lutheran Church (LCMS)

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April 14, 2022

Holy (Maundy) Thursday

Divine Service Setting One (Lutheran Service Book, pg. 151)

Hymn of Invocation 445

When You Woke That Thursday Morning

Invocation and Versicles (p. 151)

Introit

Psalm 116:1-4; antiphon: v. 5

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;
our God is merciful.

**I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.**

Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

**The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol
laid hold on me;**

I suffered distress and anguish.

Then I called on the name of the Lord:

"O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!"

**Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;
our God is merciful.**

The Kyrie (p. 152)

(The Hymn of Praise is omitted during Lent)

Salutation and Collect (p. 156)

P O Lord, in this wondrous Sacrament You have left us a remembrance of Your passion. Grant that we may so receive the sacred mystery of Your body and blood that the fruits of Your redemption may continually be manifest in us; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

G Amen. *(sung)*.

Readings (on back of bulletin)

Gradual

Hebrews 9:12a, c, 15a; Psalm 111:9a

[Christ] entered once for all into the holy places, by means of his



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own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.
**Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant,
so that those who are called may receive the promised
eternal inheritance.
He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant forever.**

Lent Verse (p. 157)

Hymn of the Day 617 O Lord, We Praise Thee

Sermon

Nicene Creed (p. 158)

Prayer of the Church

The prayer concludes:

P ...one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Presentation of the Offering

Offertory (p. 159)

Service of the Sacrament (p. 160)

Distribution Hymn

631 Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face

639 Wide Open Stand the Gates

Post-Communion Hymn: 632 O Jesus, Blessed Lord, to Thee

Post-Communion Collect (p. 166)

Stripping of the Altar

P After He had instituted the Lord's Supper, less than 24 hours
remained in the earthly life of our Lord. Events moved rapidly:
prayer in Gethsemane,

betrayal by Judas,

arrest, mock trial, beatings and scourging,

the trudge to Golgotha,

and execution by crucifixion.

As His life was stripped from Him, so we strip our altar of the signs of
life to symbolize His purposeful, redemptive suffering and death for us.

Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will have
the light of life and will never walk in darkness." The events of Golgotha
snuffed out the human life of Jesus, the Light of the world. As even crea-
tion was darkened when He suffered, so we extinguish our candles and
remove them.

The missal stand holds our altar book which guides our worship life to-
gether as we sing praises to God. As Jesus suffers, joyous songs are not
heard. As these sounds of joy are removed from our lips, so we remove
the missal stand.

Jesus' offered body and His shed blood have been given to us in, with,
and under the form of bread and wine in this Holy Sacrament. As He was
removed from us in the grave, so we remove the elements and vessels of
this Sacrament.

Our lectern and pulpit is where our Lord speaks to us through His Word,
proclaiming to us the forgiveness of sins that He has won for us. Since
our Savior's voice was removed from us in death, so we strip the para-
ments from our lectern and pulpit.

Our altar, which reminds us of Christ's sacrifice, also serves as a table.
It is here where our Lord Jesus serves us as both host and meal at His
banquet feast. The coverings and paraments are made of fine linen; mate-
rials appropriate for feasting with our King. As our King's body was
stripped in crucifixion, so our altar is stripped of its coverings.

At the conclusion of the Stripping of the Altar, all leave the sanctuary in
reverent silence.

About tonight's service:

The word "Maundy" comes from the Latin word, *mandatum*, which means "commandment." This refers to Jesus giving His disciples the new command to, "Love one another." (John 13:34) We truly see such an example of love expressed by our Lord humbly washing His disciples' feet and, even more, as He institutes the Holy Communion, giving His true body and blood for the forgiveness of sins to His disciples; the forgiveness He would earn by His suffering and death less than twenty-four hours later.

The worship services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday are part of the Triduum ("Three days") and so have a unified character. Therefore the first service (Maundy Thursday) will end with the post-communion collect and the stripping of the altar. We eagerly await the Lord's Benediction (blessing) on Easter Sunday, when we celebrate His rising in glorious triumph over death, proving that the heavenly Father has accepted His sacrifice for our sins.

Today we receive the gift of Holy Communion. Communion is an expression of faith and agreement. If you are our guest this evening, we do not want to place you in a position of agreement with our beliefs before you've had opportunity to study them. Therefore, if you are not a member of a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregation, we invite you to speak with our pastor about this special opportunity, and respectfully request that you not partake of Communion today. Thank you for your cooperation.

Acknowledgements

Cover painting by Jan van 't Hoff.

<https://www.gospelimages.com/paintings/90/institution-of-the-lords-supper?>

Old Testament Reading:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Epistle: Hebrews 10:15-25

¹⁵The Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

¹⁶"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,"

¹⁷then he adds,

"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the

confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Holy Gospel: Luke 22:7-20

⁷Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." ⁹They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" ¹⁰He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹²And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." ¹³And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹And 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." ²⁰And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Holy (Maundy) Thursday
April 14, 2022

Texts: Matthew 26:20-30; Mark 14:17-26; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

“The Three Unions in Holy Communion”

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

There are different names for the meal that Jesus instituted on the night He was betrayed. The Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Table, and the Breaking of Bread all have the benefit of being biblical terms, though Breaking of Bread requires context to determine whether it is the sacrament or a common meal being referred to. Eucharist is an ancient name, coming from the Greek verbⁱ which means “to give thanks,” based upon our Lord offering a blessing, giving thanks, over the bread and wine. Thus while the term *Eucharist* is very old and is rather popular today including amongst some in our own circles, and it is *certainly not wrong*, biblically speaking it is the weakest of the names which is why you don’t hear me use it very often.

One other name for the sacrament is the one that, except perhaps the Lord’s Supper, we are likely most familiar with, Holy Communion. St. Paul wrote, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”ⁱⁱ Sadly this is lost in many of the newer translations, which often translate the Greek word as *participation, fellowship, or sharing*. While these translations are not incorrect, and they do express the truth, yet the word choice, due to translator bias, would seem to water down the fullness of the reality that Paul is conveying, that there is a real *communion* that is present in the sacrament. In fact, this evening, we’re going to see that there are actually *three* communions that are occurring in the celebration of the Holy Communion.

When eating, your senses help reveal what is in a dish. Some are obvious. Others are very subtle and though they contribute to the whole, it takes pretty amazing taste buds to pick them out. And for some you just have to ask the one who prepared the meal, “What’s in it?”

In the Lord’s Supper it’s easy to know that bread and wine are present. We see it, smell it, and taste it. And despite philosophical ideas to the contrary, the Word of God says that bread and wine are not only present before the celebration of the Communion, but also during it. After all, the word *communion* means that two things are being brought into union, with neither replacing the other *for then there would be no communion*. But while bread and wine are certainly present, yet it is that which is being united to the bread and wine that is key.

“This is my body,” “This is my blood.”ⁱⁱⁱ *This is why* St. Paul writes, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” It is true that you cannot see, smell, or taste Jesus’ body and blood, not even with the greatest of senses. But He who has prepared this meal says His body and blood is in it and He would be the One who knows! Yet, someone might ask,

“Wasn’t Jesus speaking figuratively when he said this? Isn’t this eating of bread and wine just something to help us remember what Jesus did for us. After all, He said ‘Do this, *in remembrance* of me!’”

This can sound so reasonable, but that dear Christians is the very danger present. *Reason*, fallen, corrupted, human *reason*, is being used to question, challenge, and undo the very words that the Lord Christ spoke. Let us consider a few points.

First, remember who spoke these words, the Second Person of the Godhead, the incarnate eternal Son of God. He is the very Word by which all things were made and by which all of creation is still upheld.^{iv} He is the One who multiplied the loaves and fishes, healed the blind, the deaf and the sick, and raised the dead including Himself. If you can believe all this, which every Christian sincerely does, then *why* would we doubt His ability to unite His body with some bread and His blood with some wine? As if that miracle is just too hard for Him!

Second, Jesus is instituting this meal as a testament, that is, His *will* which comes into effect *when He dies*. When considering a will, no mere human of just average intelligence would say one thing, but mean something else. And understand, there were words and phrases to convey ideas like “represents, symbolizes, makes you think about,” etc. Yet Jesus chose none of them, but instead chose “is.” Jesus who is the *Godman*, omniscient according to His divine nature, but also of the greatest faculties according to His human nature for it was neither corrupted, nor even weakened by sin. He knew precise words were needed and He said precisely what He meant! Consequently then, as a third point, as it is *Jesus’ will* that has come into effect when He died, then we, whether individually, as a denomination, or even as the Church Universal, have no authority to change it, but only the obligation to receive it *as He has given it!*

Fourth, the inspired apostle St. Paul writes, “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.”^v Paul says that when we eat and drink, we ought to recognize the body of the Lord. You can’t discern what is not there, thus the body and blood of the Lord must truly be present in the Communion. Paul also says that those who receive the sacrament improperly sin against, not bread and wine, but the body and blood of the Lord that is in union (Communion!) with them. A sin which brought God’s judgment of weakness, illness, and even physical death upon those who misused the sacrament.^{vi} Something hardly likely if one merely misused bread and wine!

Fifth, while it is true that Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me,” we must ask what exactly is the “this” we are supposed to do? *It is the very thing that Jesus just instituted, eating His body and drinking His blood. That* is what we are to do in remembrance of Him! Is there a remembrance aspect to the meal? Absolutely! But is it merely a memorial meal? Absolutely not!

And so the faithful Church throughout time has confessed that Christ’s body and blood are truly present in a miraculous way with the bread and wine. Martin Luther said it well: “If a hundred thousand devils should rush forward and ask that question [How can bread and wine also be the body and blood of Christ?], we know that all the demons together with all the scholars of the

world do not have as much wisdom as God does in his little finger.” So the words of Christ are clear and they will stand forever, “This is my body. . . . This is my blood.”

Truly, there are many different levels of friendship, or fellowship. From are closest family and friends, then through various acquaintances, finally down to those who are neither our dearest family nor our closest friends whom we honestly hope to not have to see, to interact with. Tragically, yet truly, it is that last grouping that was our relationship with God. Because of our sin, we shouldn’t have thought of being allowed even somewhere in the same neighborhood as Him, much less being invited to join Him at His table for a meal.

For just consider how we have treated God during our lives. We have regarded the possessions, talents, even the life itself that He has given and entrusted to us as if we are the owners, not the managers (stewards). We have refused to keep his commands, sometimes blatantly, other times desperately seeking “wiggle room.” Yet, God does the unimaginable. He invites us to His meal of closest fellowship. Why? The answer is found in the meal itself. For it is written, “[Christ] has now reconciled [you] in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.”^{vii} That same body that hung on the cross and blood that was shed *is present in this meal*, given for us to eat and to drink.

And so in the Holy Communion Christ our dear Lord brings us into communion with Himself and His Father. By giving us His true human body and blood we are assured that He is our true kinsman redeemer. By giving us His true body and blood which has earned for us the forgiveness of our sins He gives us a faith-strengthening assurance that we *are* truly forgiven. By the ascended and glorified Lord giving us His true body and blood, we who are still trapped in our human weaknesses and misery are given the certain pledge of our own future resurrection and glorification, as it is written, “[T]he Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.”^{viii} So also, just as it is certain that Christ must abide in us and we in Him in order to bear good fruit, so in Holy Communion He comes to us in the most intimate way, abiding with us, *communing* with us and we in Him, by His giving us His body and blood to eat and drink, a sure source of strength for a new life as the living Lord lives within us!

There remains one more communion to be spoken of, the one most often ignored, but it is just as true as the previous two communions since it grows out of them: the communion of those who eat and drink *with one another*. When our Lord instituted the Holy Communion, His disciples were individually quite diverse—fishermen and tax collectors, zealots and doubters, out-spoken and laid-back. Yet they formed one group. What united them? Faith in Jesus.

That’s what binds us together too. We are very different in many ways, our interests, our vocations, our politics, our age, our income brackets, some of us are men, others are women. The list could go on and on. Yet, in Jesus we are united—united in faith as sinners who are now saints through the blood of Christ which washes our sins away. As it is written, “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”^{ix}

This is not a unity that we make, but one that is made for us into which we are brought. It is a unity which is the answer to our Lord’s high priestly prayer to His Father, “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us.”^x But this means that

it is a unity that is not based upon our own thinking, feelings, or agreeing to disagree. True Christian unity and fellowship is based upon a united confession of the teaching of the apostles, the Word of God. Only those with whom we have such a fellowship are we to break the bread of the sacrament.^{xi} Anything less is to confess a communion which is not truly and fully present.

Fellow redeemed, tonight we shall soon confess in a concrete manner that we are one, that for us “there is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”^{xii} It is a hidden spiritual unity of invisible faith that we confess as we join together in speaking the creed. It is a hidden spiritual unity of invisible faith that we express when we sing psalm, hymns, and spiritual songs together, and when we pray together. And it is a hidden spiritual unity of invisible faith made most evident as we kneel side by side at the altar receiving Jesus’ body and blood together as those who share a common confession of the Word of God.

In a few moments we will receive the Holy Communion. May we recognize the communion of Jesus’ body and blood with the bread and wine. May we rejoice in the communion between ourselves and God which is strengthened by eating Jesus’ body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. And may we be encouraged by the close communion we have with one another expressed by our coming together at the Lord’s Table, a close communion which will be made fully manifest at the heavenly banquet yet to come. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

ⁱ Εὐχαριστέω, transliterated as “eucharisteó.”

ⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 10:16, The Holy Bible, New King James Version (NKJV).

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 26:26, 28.

^{iv} Colossians 1:16-17.

^v 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV)* unless otherwise noted.

^{vi} 1 Corinthians 11:30.

^{vii} Colossians 1:22.

^{viii} Philippians 3:20.

^{ix} 1 Corinthians 10:17.

^x John 17:21.

^{xi} Cf. Acts 2:42.

^{xii} Ephesians 4:4, 5-6.