

Maundy Thursday

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:23-32

²³For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. ²⁷Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. ³²When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

Theme: “Do this in Remembrance of Me”

We Americans are not good at remembering the past. There are certain things that we remember such as the 4th of July, the Civil War or World War 2, but our memories are often short on things that we did not experience ourselves. How many people under the age of 40 think that the landing on the moon was a significant event? I remember about 10 years ago in confirmation class, I mentioned that the Luther sites had been in the former communist part of Germany. One of the kids asked me what “Communism” was. They had never heard of the Cold War or Berlin Wall. It will probably not be that long until the events of 9-11 will be forgotten by those who didn’t experience it.

For us the important things usually began on the day that we were born. But in the Bible, there is an emphasis in remembering God’s great acts for his people from generation to generation. There is no greater act to remember than when Christ gave His body and shed His blood for us on the cross. He instituted this sacrament that we do it in remembrance of Him.

I. There are many examples of things in the Old Testament, which God commanded, so that future generations would remember God’s mercy.

When God instituted the Passover in Exodus 12, He told the Israelites, “*Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.*” (Vs 17) It would remind the people how God delivered them from their bondage in Egypt. God would also institute the Feast of Tabernacles in which the Jews would live in tents. He said, “*Live in tents for 7 days: All native-born Israelites are to live in tents, so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in tents when I brought them out of Egypt.*” (Lev 23:42f) This festival reminded the Israelites that God cared for them as they wandered through the wilderness on the way to the promised land.

In addition God often had the people set of stones of remembrance. After the people crossed the Jordan River to enter the promised land, Joshua had them take 12 stones from the Jordan and set them up where they camped. He said, “[*This is*] to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when

your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever." (Jos 4:7) In 1 Samuel 7 Samuel called Israel to a day of repentance at Mizpah. While the people were there, the Philistines came to attack them. Samuel cried out to the Lord, and God delivered His people. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up. He named it Ebenezer, which means "Stone of Help," and he said, "*Thus far the Lord has helped us.*" (7:12)

God commanded His people to remember His deeds for them. He instituted festivals and told them to set up monuments to remember those deeds for many generations to come. David summed it up when he said, "*Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles and the judgements he pronounced.*" (Ps 105:5)

II. There is no greater deed to remember than what Jesus did for us on Calvary.

He personally paid the price of our sins. Jesus knew exactly what He was getting into He brought the disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. When He finished praying, He said, "*Rise, let us go! Here comes My betrayer.*" (Mt 26:26) He allowed Judas to betray Him. He allowed the soldiers to arrest Him. When no one could find any charge against Him, the High Priest finally turned to Him and said, "*Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Jesus could not help but say the words that would condemn Him, "*Yes, it is as you say.*" He was condemned, mocked, beaten, and nailed to a cross to die. Peter writes what the price of our salvation was, "*It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*" (1 Pet 1:18f) The price of our sins was the innocent suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. He is the Lamb of God, who took our sins on Himself, that we might be clothed with His righteousness.

This sacrament reminds us of that sacrifice. During the last Passover with His disciples, Jesus did two things that were unusual. When He gave them the unleavened bread, He said, "*This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.*" When He gave them the cup of wine, He said, "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.*" There is nothing that reminds us of our Lord's passion more than this sacrament does because in it He gives us His body, which was given for us on the cross, and His blood which was shed for us on the cross. Paul goes so far to say, "*Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.*" What the Lord gives to us in this sacrament is holy. We receive the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the bread and wine.

It is the ultimate act of remembrance that when Jesus suffered and died on the cross, He did it for me. He died for the forgiveness of my sins. Paul also writes, "*Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*" The celebration of this sacrament reminds us and proclaims to the world that Jesus has paid for every single one of our sins in full on the cross.

III. It is important that we do not neglect this sacrament.

It also connects us with all God's people. Think of all the congregations that have celebrated this sacrament throughout the centuries. The Lord's Supper unites us with them. It also unites us with Christians throughout the world today. Paul says, "*Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*" (1 Cor 10:17) It is also a bond that connects us with our brothers and sisters in Christ in this congregation. It is our weekly meal together. Just as it is good for a family to gather together to eat, so it is important that we as a congregation gather to feast on our Lord's Supper. It is the way that Christ feeds our faith when we remember the price of our salvation in this sacrament.

We also want to teach our children the importance of this sacrament. When I was a kid, we never went up to the altar with our parents. Actually, we left the church just before the communion liturgy and went outside to play. But I think that it is good that kids remain in the service for communion today and that they come up to the altar. It is good for them to see this sacrament in action and to desire to receive it. We look forward to that special day when they will also kneel with us to remember the greatest deed of the Lord when they will also receive the supper of our Lord with us at His altar. Just like the ordinances of the Old Testament, this sacrament is given so that all generations will remember the salvation of our Lord.

Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Thank God for this sacrament that reminds us of His salvation for us, and we pray that we may make use of it, that we may remember in a most personal way, that Christ has redeemed us from our sins by His perfect sacrifice for us on the cross.

Amen.

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