

Maundy, Thursday, 2022

*Text 1 Cor.10: 23 For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread 24 and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." 26 For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again. 27 So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. 29 For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself.*

Today, is Maundy Thursday. Maundy comes from the Latin word, *mandatum*, which means command. This is the night Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12) Maundy Thursday is commandment Thursday. But also in Luke 22:19, Jesus says about Communion, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

"A sacrament is a holy thing, a means of God's grace, where something earthly (bread and wine) is used by God and received by faith in order to touch our hearts with God's forgiveness, strength, help, healing, or love. Holy Communion is an earthly way we meet the holy in life as we celebrate God's love and presence in a special way.

Sacraments are those acts of worship, begun by Christ and celebrated by Christians in which we are visited in a special way by God's Holy Spirit. They are sacred moments in which Christ presents himself to us. Listen to the words of a song about Communion. (Child of God - James Thiem adapted)

*Chorus: Child of God hear His Holy Word, gather round the table of the Lord. Take His body, take His blood, and we'll sing a song of love, hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelu-ia.*

*1. Brothers, sisters we are one, and our life has just begun. In the Spirit, we are young. We can live forever. Chorus*

*2. Shout together to the Lord, who has promised our reward, happiness a hundredfold, and we'll live forever. Chorus*

*3. Jesus gave a new command that we love our fellow man till we reach the Promised Land where we'll live forever.*

*4. If we want to live with him, we must also die with him, die to selfishness and sin, and we'll rise forever.*

*5. Make the world a unity, make all folk one family, till we meet the Trinity, and live with them forever.*

*Sing*

*6. With the church we celebrate, Jesus' coming we await. So, we make a holiday so we'll live forever. Chorus*

There is so much to this sacrament as we can see from this song that says, "Brothers, sisters, we are one and our life has just begun." In Communion, we belong to each other. We are truly family. The second verse says that communion has something to do with living forever. It assures us of eternal life and our salvation won by Jesus Christ on the cross. The third verse suggests that in communion, we are invited not just to tolerate, respect and appreciate our brothers and sisters, but to love them. Verse 4 reminds us that we are partners with Jesus in servanthood dying with him, in our case, to selfishness and sin. Verse 5 reminds us that as a community of faith, we will meet the Trinity at the eternal feast in heaven. Jesus said, "I will not drink this cup again until I drink it anew with you in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 26:29) Verse 6 of the song reminds us that we await with anticipation Jesus' second coming, celebrating his love and grace in the meantime as Paul says in I Cor. 11: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

Holy Communion first began at the Passover Meal where Jesus and His disciples met the night before His crucifixion. The meal has symbolic items on the menu: leafy vegetables dipped in salt water to remind us of the tears of God's people as slaves in Egypt; another item is matzah bread which is the bread of freedom and also the bread of poverty; bitter herbs represent the bitter years

of slavery. During the meal, the youngest asks questions of the oldest that ends up with the telling of the Exodus story.

Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples but using the last cup of wine, He reinterpreted the covenant as a new covenant. Some see Holy Communion from the “remembrance” side more as a symbol and others as Christ’s true presence in the bread and wine emphasizing the word “is” in the scripture “this is my body” and “this is my blood.” The more symbolic understanding is more like how the flag represents our country but the flag isn’t the country. If pressed to explain the change from bread to Christ’s body or wine to blood, no one would say that there is a chemical change. They would call it a change in nature which is a mystery.

All four Gospels mention that last supper. John’s Gospel includes Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-23, John 13:1-20.) Each gives the view of that disciple about the Last Supper.

We are invited to gather around the table of the Lord in gratitude for the assurance that, in the sacrament, we receive forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation not because we eat and drink but because we believe the words of our Savior, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” (Luther)

The sacraments help us to be open to God’s continual participation in our lives so that his sanctifying grace might melt us and mold us. Christ presents Himself to us through these means of grace so that we may experience His presence anew in our lives. God has given us these gifts of grace so we can live in His love and keep on growing as disciples in every phase of our lives. Listen to this song from Twila Paris. The words are:

How beautiful the hands that served the wine and the bread and the sons of the earth, how beautiful the feet that walked the long dusty road and the hill to the cross, how beautiful is the body of Christ.

How beautiful the heart that bled that took all my sins and bore it instead, how beautiful the tender eyes that choose to forgive and never despise, how beautiful is the body of Christ.

And as He lay down His life, we offer this sacrifice that we will live just as He died willing to pay the price, willing to pay the price.

How beautiful the radiant bride that waits for her Groom with His light in her eyes, how beautiful when humble hearts give the fruit of pure lives so that others may live, how beautiful, how beautiful is the body of Christ.

How beautiful the feet that bring the sound good news and the love of the King, how beautiful the hands that serve the wine and the bread and the sons of the earth, how beautiful is the body of Christ. Amen