

## “Remembrance”

Maundy Thursday, April 9, 2009

Tonight is the night. On this night we remember the Last Supper of Jesus as He spent the last night of His earthy life with His dearest friends. When we read through the Gospel reading for tonight, there are so many things to look at, discern and grow from. I'd like to take a look at just two things though, because they impact us and make a huge difference in what we're doing here tonight.

The first thing is this: our Gospel reading tonight says the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him, “Where do You want us to go and make preparations for You to eat the Passover?” This seems like an innocent enough question, but there's something else there we might not recognize at first: this was a pretty bold question for them to ask, just assuming Jesus was going to eat the Passover with them! This would be a little like me coming to you as an individual and asking, “So, where do you want to eat Christmas dinner with me and my friends instead of with your family?”

Jesus loved these 12 disciples. He loved them so much He spent a major “holiday” with them instead of His own mother and brothers. And what's more, they loved Jesus so much, they did the same – the spent the holiday with Him, instead of their own families. Can you imagine Peter, who we know was married, saying to his wife and mother-in-law, “Yeah, I'm not going to be with you on this most important, most holy, most festive day. I'm going to go sit around a table with Jesus and my 11 closest friends.”

Jesus loved them. He loves you, too. Each one of these disciples came with ‘baggage.’ Peter had incurable foot-in-mouth syndrome; John and his brother James had short fuses that earned them the nick-name from Jesus, Boanerges – “Sons of thunder”; Matthew spent his life stealing from his own people, and never seemed to be able to forgive himself; Thomas didn't know what he believed, and wasn't even sure Jesus was really the One they had been waiting for; Nathaniel had been prejudiced against Jesus because of the hometown Jesus grew up in; and the list goes on and on. And there in the midst of it all, sat Judas.

*While they were reclining at the table eating, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me.” They were saddened, and one by one they said to Him, “Surely not I?” “It is one of the Twelve,” He replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me.”*

In that culture, to break bread with someone meant to enter into a pact of friendship and mutual trust. It would be an act of the most outrageous treachery to break bread with, and then betray, your host. Judas was sitting in the place of honor at our Lord's left, while John was reclining to His right (John 13:23). When Jesus gave Judas the bread dipped in the herbs, it was the gracious

act of a host to a special guest. Even this did not break Judas' heart, because even after Judas took the morsel, he still betrayed Jesus.

Speaking to everyone, but especially to our two young people who will take Communion for the first time tonight, when we come into the presence of the Lord, when we participate in the meal He has given us, it is the act of our gracious host, Jesus, who serves us Himself. Think of the words we use of institution – this is my body, this is my blood, and they are given for the remission of sins. This meal tonight is one that should break our hearts as we realize our sin, and at the same time fill us with such joy that our hearts break because they can't contain all the happiness we have over being forgiven and set free!

This is the second thing we're taking a look at, and it's *the* major thing we need to be aware of when we take Communion. Danielle, Noah, we've talked about a lot of things over the past 6 times we've meant. Do you remember what the two things were that I said are the most important things to remember regarding Communion? Ok, I'm not going to put you on the spot right now! The two 'biggies' are that Communion is done for the forgiveness of sins, and "The Real Presence." I want to show you, and everyone here tonight something very important.

When Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (though not in our reading tonight, this is recorded in other places in the Bible), that word, "remembrance" is very important. The word translated "remembrance" means much more than "in memory of." You can do something in memory of a dead person, but Jesus isn't dead – He's alive!

This is really important, so please hear this: the word "remembrance" in the Greek – in the original language God chose to use to give us His Word – carries the idea of a present participation in a past event, as if that past event is still going on now, and we participate in the past – but also currently happening – event. Danielle, you play soccer, Noah, you play baseball – think of it like joining in a game that's already happening. It's a game in that started in the past, but is still going on. It didn't start just because you showed up, it already started before you ever got there, and is still continuing – you're just invited to join in and participate in the on-going event.

So back to communion and this idea of participating in a past event that is still going on now. Communion is not a meal to remember Jesus, but a meal to *participate* in with Jesus. Remember what our epistle reading tonight said? *"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?"*

This is not some "magical" experience produced by the bread and wine. It is a spiritual experience that comes through our understanding of the meaning of the Supper, and it is so important the Holy Spirit even warned us about not taking this seriously. In 1 Corinthians 11:27–34 we are told, *Therefore, 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.* {And why is

this? Because Jesus is there and giving Himself to us!} *A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment {condemnation} on himself.*

If we recognize the body and the blood of the Lord, if we recognize what's happening in the Lord's Supper, we are forgiven and it changes us. Those old sins, those old things that we cling to cannot co-exist with a new life in Jesus. Remember the other thing we read in our Epistle reading tonight, "*You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.*"

If the 'food' at the table of Jesus is His body and His blood, then what is the 'food' at the table of demons? Not recognizing the true body and blood of Jesus; not desiring to change our lives and stop committing those same sins over and over again that God has told us not to do in His Word; it's arguing with God and saying, "I know what You say in Your word, but here's what I think..."

The Lord's Supper is not a little thing. It's not something to take lightly. It's something to take seriously, joyfully, and respectfully

So, once again, here we are. Tonight is the night. Tonight we gather to celebrate the night the Lord's Supper was instituted, and participate in it with Jesus once again. It's a night to gather around the altar and receive the life-changing, sin-forgiving meal of Jesus. It's a night to rejoice in the love Jesus has for us, and the simple, yet profound, way in which He shows us His love when He comes to us in His body and blood.

The disciples were very bold in asking Jesus where He wanted to eat the Passover meal with them. What they found out that night is the meal they had eaten their entire lives took on new meaning and gave them a new life. And we find out the same thing tonight, too.

Will you pray with me, please?

Lord Jesus,

Tonight we come very boldly to the altar to receive Your Supper. We receive it tonight *not* in a remembrance of a past event, but in participation of an ongoing feast with You!

We come tonight in trust. Trust that You are here, and trust that You will forgive. Holy Spirit of God – we need to be changed; we need to stop arguing with You, arguing against Your word in favor of our opinions; we need to be made new; we need you to take our baggage. We're done with it. It's held on to us for too long, and we can't get rid of it on our own. Take it, take us, and refresh us in this meal again tonight.

Thank You Jesus, for this supper. Thank You for loving us so much that You come to us in such a simple and wonderful way. Thank You for these two young people who will

come to Your altar tonight for the first time. Bless us all as we join hearts around Your table, not the table of demons, to give You our sins to be washed clean and set right again with our Heavenly Father.

Thank You so much Jesus,

Amen.