

JESUS' PERSONAL WORD
Luke 22:1-23

Maundy Thursday Supper/Communion
March 28, 2013
Pastor Nathan J. Thompson

The scene is the upper room. Jesus and his disciples, being faithful Jews, had gathered together to celebrate the Passover Meal. Jesus was the host for this meal and they followed the traditional order of prayers and Scripture readings and songs.

But when they got to that part in the meal where the host says a prayer of thanks for the bread, and passes it to the others, Jesus changed the words and meaning of the Passover by blessing the bread and saying, "Take eat, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

And after supper, when he took the traditional cup of wine, he again said a prayer of thanks, and he again changed the meaning of the Passover by giving the cup to his disciples and saying, "Drink of it all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Jesus was proclaiming through this meal that just as God had promised and made a covenant with the children of Israel that he would be their God and would lead them to the Promised Land; and just as the blood of the sacrificed lamb on the doorposts had set them free from their oppressors, in the same way God has made a new covenant with his people through his Son. Jesus is the Lamb of God, and by his sacrifice on the cross his blood sets us free from our slavery to sin.

We can imagine how the disciples of Jesus must have wondered about what he was saying. Not knowing what the events of the next few hours would hold, they must have been curious about how this could be Christ's body and blood. But after his death and resurrection, then they finally understood what had happened that night and they began eating this supper regularly in remembrance of Jesus, and for the forgiveness of their sins.

I can just imagine how the disciples must have remembered and reflected on that Last Supper with Jesus. But I wonder if Jesus didn't say some more things to his disciples that night when he gave them the bread and the wine. I wonder if he didn't talk to each one personally. Perhaps he said to Peter, "Peter, my beloved, we have had some good times and some bad times together."

You have so much excitement in you, but often you end up putting your foot in your mouth. I know I had to tell you to get behind me Satan which hurt me a great deal, but I also called you the Rock upon which I would build my church. In a few hours I know that you will deny me three times."

“I know you will have doubts and struggles in your life of faith and in your leadership in the church, but I want you to know that I love you. This is my body and blood given and shed for you, Peter, for the forgiveness of your sins, and for strengthening in your daily walk of faith.”

I wonder if Jesus might not have said to the disciple Thomas, “Thomas, my friend, you are the one who has always had so many problems with your faith. It seems like you have doubted almost everything I have said unless I have given you proof. I know that it’s good not to believe everything you hear, but in matters of faith I hope that you watch out because your doubts could easily lead you away from me.”

“This is my body and blood, Thomas, given and shed for you to help relieve your doubts and fears. My body and blood are the proof of my love and grace, and as you eat and drink, I want you to have the assurance that I did it all for you.”

Now tonight as we share in the Lord’s Supper, as we do this in remembrance of Jesus, it is as if we too are in the upper room with Jesus. He is the host for our meal. It is his holy supper. And he is the one who invites us to come to his Holy Table.

Jesus has promised that he is present with us, that he is giving himself to us in his Word and in this bread and wine. And so tonight, as we come in response to his invitation, I wonder if Jesus doesn’t continue to say some personal things to us. Let’s for a moment imagine what he might be saying.

“Oh hi, Julie Perkins, it’s good to see you here tonight. I know you have had quite a time these past few days. The pressures of work and being a single parent have left you feeling frustrated with life. You hardly have any time for yourself and for your own personal growth in faith and in my Word. I’m glad we can spend these quiet moments together.”

“This is my body and blood given for you, Julie, to let you know that I’m with you in all the hassles and busyness of life. I am with you to give you strength and to encourage you, and I am with you to give you forgiveness and peace.”

“Hello, Peter Gibson, I’m glad you are here again tonight. I know that the sorrow and pain of losing your wife to cancer surrounds your whole being. I know that there are times you wonder if you can go on with life. This is my body and blood given for you, Pete, to comfort you in your pain and to remind you that I have won the victory over death. Remember, Pete, that in my love you have the assurance of everlasting life.”

“And next we have teenager Ryan Albertson. Tonight you are so happy because you did really well on that very difficult test the other day and you have lots of good friends at school. This is my body and blood, Ryan, given and shed for you to rejoice with you when things go well, and to give you support and help during the many times when things don’t go as well.”

“And here is the whole Carson family. I know that you have had your share of conflicts and anger with each other. Family life can be difficult. Often feelings are hurt and unkind things are

said. This is my body and blood given and shed for you and for all families, to help bring healing, forgiveness and peace in our homes, as well as healing in our extended families and relationships.”

“And finally we have 5th grader Shelly Marshall. I know that your life is not so cluttered up yet with major problems and worries, so you are really able to hear my Word and accept my love. This is my body and blood given and shed for you, Shelly, to strengthen your child-like faith and to firmly establish our relationship together so you will be prepared to face the joys and trials of this uncertain world as you grow older.”

Yes, my friend, tonight and every time we celebrate the Lord’s Supper we are in the upper room with Jesus. And as we come to his table, he comes to each one of us and personally speaks his word of love, forgiveness and encouragement.

What is it tonight, my dear friend that Jesus is saying to you? What is there in your life that you need to leave at the foot of his cross? Be assured that there is nothing that we can hide from him. Be assured that there is nothing so terrible or sinful, and no problem or temptation so great that he will not forgive and that he will not understand.

As we come to his table, let us all listen to Jesus as he speaks his personal word to us, “This is my body, this is my blood, given and shed for you and for me, for the forgiveness of our sins; for the renewal and transformation of our lives and relationships with others; for the strengthening of our faith, our service and our witness to others; and for the joy and the assurance of his presence in our lives now, as well as in the life to come.”

This is my body and blood given and shed for you, and you, and you! Amen.