

A New Covenant

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many. This is our text.

It was a strange night in Jerusalem. It had already been four days since Jesus entered into the town, with a crowd of people cheering him on, laying down palms as he entered on the back of a donkey. The cheers of Hosanna in the highest seem distant, almost like it happened weeks or months ago. So much had happened since then, Jesus cleansed the temple, clearing out the money changers who were treating God's holy dwelling place like a raucous market place. The religious leaders attempted to entrap Jesus, in order to have him arrested and silenced. Jesus taught in parables, and continued to prophecy his death to the disciples. All the while the town was buzzing, full of people, there to celebrate the Passover.

The Passover, that yearly celebration, that harkens all the way back to Egypt. All the way back to Moses, when the angel of death came over all of Egypt, and took the lives of the first born. But the angel of death passed over the houses of the Hebrews who had marked their doors with lamb's blood. This Passover night, was to be celebrated, remembered, every single year. A remembrance of God, and how he delivered His people, the Israelites from the bondage of slavery.

That was what they were celebrating on that strange Passover night. This remembrance of freedom, of the sacrificial lamb, the blood on the door posts, the meal. As Jesus gathered with his disciples in that upper room, this is what was on their minds. The remembrance of God's everlasting covenant with his people. The covenant that God had made with them, it was the agreement, the contract between him and the Israelites that they will be His people, and he will be their only God. That God would forgive them, through the sacrifices that they would offer.

There was something about that night that most certainly seemed different. As the twelve gathered together to celebrate the Passover with Jesus. Jesus washed his disciple's feet, he continued to teach them, but the most unsettling moment of the evening had been when Jesus predicted his own betrayal. As the disciples questioned their devotion to Jesus one after another, finally Jesus pointed out the betrayer, as the one who was dipping the bread in the dish with him... Of course, as we know from our time spent in the Garden this Lent, it was Judas' hand that was in the dish with Christ.

This must have been strange for the disciples, as they were saddened by this accusation, and the dismissal of Judas. That night seemed to take a turn from celebration and remembrance, to one of tension and sorrow. It was amongst this sorrow, where Christ then takes bread, and after blessing it, he broke it giving it to his disciples saying "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

These words, spoken to his disciples, on this strange night, were rather peculiar as well. Surely, the disciples were not fully aware of what all was happening when Christ first instituted the Lord's Supper that night, when Christ made this new covenant. They didn't know what this strange evening would bring, or how it would unfold.

You may be sitting there, wondering, why does all of this matter? Why does this night, and all of its peculiarity, matter to us? Why do we gather together on Maunday Thursday? We gather together, because it has everything to do with us. It matters because all of this, this whole strange night, all of Holy Week, and everything that is about to unfold, is for you. It was on this night that Christ established a new covenant, one that would be ratified by the shedding of his blood on the cross, for many... for you.

It is remarkable to think about this, to think about the God who created everything, has made a covenant with each of us. It is sometimes extremely hard to believe that such a mighty, and righteous God would do such a thing with miserable sinners like ourselves. But this new covenant is for you, who have worshipped other gods. It is for you, who have not honored your father and mother. It is for you, the ones who have lied, who have cheated, who have stolen. It is for you, who have hate in your hearts. It is for every one of you, who doubt God's promises. It is for you, it is for me, it is for us, sinners.

As sinners, we often doubt God's grace. We say we believe it, but really, they are only words. We come to church on Sunday, focused on other things, our jobs, our sports, our money. We are present in worship physically, but not mentally. We come to the rail and receive

this supper but don't recognize that it is truly Christ's body and blood, and we do not recognize that it is for us. Deep down, we feel like it is too good to be true. How could God really love me.

Well, tonight we get to experience God's great love for us. We get to experience this new covenant. We get to touch it, taste it, eat it and drink it. As we gather together this evening, we are not just here, sitting back, and listening to this event unfold. We are not spectators, but instead we join with Christ in the upper room. We come to this table, and we reach out to receive Christ's body and blood that was shed for many, that was shed for you. Come to this table to take in this peculiar, yet miraculous mystery. Where we hear the words of Christ spoken directly to us, and here that your sins are forgiven.

This is not something we must do to earn God's grace. It does not depend on how many Holy Week services we attend, or how many friends we bring to church with us. All Christ asks is that we believe in these words, "Take; this is my body. This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many."

Let the words "be a comfort to you. No matter what you have going on in your life in this moment find the comfort of this new covenant. Whether you have medical issues, marital struggles, overwhelming stress, finances, or dealing with the loss of someone you love, know that at the end of this week, Christ will have sealed this covenant with his blood. He will have taken away our sins, and will stand victorious. But we are not there yet. But for tonight, as you come to the table, and as we depart in silence, focus on those words, that Christ speaks to each and every one of. This is my body, this is my blood... poured out for many... and it has been poured out for you.

Amongst the noise and trouble of this life, let this night be a reminder, that all of the things Christ is about to endure, His conflict in the garden, his abandonment, his trial, his suffering, his crucifixion, all of this was for you. As we come back tomorrow, Saturday, and Sunday, remember these words... that Christ poured out his blood... for you.