

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus be yours this Maundy Thursday. An additional text for tonight is from the 23rd chapter of Luke which reads: **“Peter said to Jesus, “Lord I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” Jesus said (to Peter), “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”**”(Luke 22:33-34) Here ends our text. The title for tonight’s sermon is ‘sitting with Peter’. Let us pray...Amen.

The theme for this year’s mid-week Lenten services was ‘They were there’. The sermons looked at some of the people who were around Jesus during His final days, or on the day of His crucifixion. Tonight we continue and look at Peter. And really, who better to look at on this night than Peter, the man who sat with Jesus, was fed Christ’s own body and blood, whose feet Jesus washed, who walked with his Lord, and who saw most everything Jesus did on the first Maundy Thursday.

Tonight we begin to celebrate the three holy days of Christ’s Passover. The Maundy Thursday service concludes the Lenten period of preparation for Christ’s Passion and Resurrection and leads into His sacrifice on our behalf. This night we remember what Jesus did that night, as our Lord and Saviour gathered together with His disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem. This night is also when our Lord would be betrayed by Judas. Before that, they celebrated the Passover meal together remembering the deliverance and salvation of the nation of Israel from the hands of the Egyptians by the hand of God. But this meal was different. During the meal, Jesus **“took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples and said: ‘Take, eat, this is my body given for you, ... take and drink, this cup is the new testament, the covenant, in my blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’**”(Matthew 26:26-28) This all happened only hours before Jesus, our Saviour’s, body would be broken for you. Just hours before Jesus would give His life as your ransom, when He would pour out His blood and die for all your sins.

So tonight we rejoice in the *Mandatum novum*—the new commandment—Christ gave the church to love one another. Jesus demonstrated His love for His disciples by humbling Himself and washing their feet, but Jesus demonstrated His love even more so through the instituted of the Lord’s Supper. That night Christ began a meal and fed His disciples with His own body and blood, broken and shed for them—for you—for the forgiveness of all your sins. We remember and rejoice in those gifts—His Word and Sacrament—which Christ continues to give His bride, the Church, on earth, and through which He continues to bless us with His forgiveness, His grace, His redemption, His reconciliation.

For the Lord’s Supper, started on this Maundy, or Holy Thursday, is the longest meal in history, in fact it has never concluded. For the One hosting it, the One feeding us, and the One who offers Himself as the meal, is Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, today and for eternity.

Tonight again the Gospel is proclaimed into your ears for the strengthening of your faith in Christ and His salvation for you, and Christ Himself will be placed into your mouth for the reassurance of your salvation in Christ. Here is where Jesus promises to be and where Christ’s forgiveness and salvation come directly to you and for you.

Now going back to the first Maundy Thursday evening, Jesus gathered with His 12 disciples one final time before His death. Jesus didn't bring everyone off the street in for this meal, not even all the people who followed Him. The reason is this meal, the Lord's Supper, is different than anything other meal. This meal does not just feed body, nor is it isolated to only one location or time. This meal, the Lord's Supper, transcends time and space: heaven meets earth, Christ Himself descends to us and for us to feast on Him for our salvation.

Now that night Peter sat, or reclined, with Jesus at this meal. Peter heard Jesus' words, received his Saviour's broken body and shed blood for his forgiveness. Peter responded with a commitment to follow Jesus even to prison or to death. The other disciples promised the same to Jesus. They didn't realize what was about to happen.

Still, knowing what would happen in the following hours, Jesus ate with cowards, deniers, betrayers, and the like: He ate with known sinners who would give up on Him, but He still gave Himself to them and for them.

Jesus knew what was to happen and even told the disciples of the situation. He would be betrayed by one of the twelve. Yet, while only one betrayed Jesus, Peter would deny Jesus, and nine of the other ten would completely abandon Jesus. All of them tucked their tails and ran after Jesus' arrest. Only one stayed within eyeshot of Jesus all the way to the cross. Even mighty and faithful Peter, who committed and gave his life to Jesus, followed for a while but cowered at the first confrontation and completely denied even knowing Jesus three times!

Peter, this night, was no better than Judas! Both are no worse than you. Peter, when the chips were down was willing to throw his Lord and Saviour under the bus to save his own skin! The man who had followed Jesus for three years, seen countless miracles, and was even feed Jesus for his salvation, rejected Jesus. Still, knowing all Peter would do, Jesus was still willing to give Peter His own body and blood for the forgiveness of all his sins and to strengthen his faith.

Though Peter was willing to give his life to Jesus that Maundy Thursday, he was not able to. The only One truly willing and able to give His life was the one feeding the twelve, not the twelve eating or being washed by the good Shepherd: they were simply receiving the gifts there offered. We are no different

And what gifts they are: the God of all creation had taken on our flesh and bones, He had also taken on our sins, guilt, and iniquities, and was in the process of reconciling us back to God. Jesus was feeding them, as He feeds us, the forgiveness of all their sins through His own body and blood. Jesus took the reconciliation and deliverance He was going to earn on the cross and gave it to them the day before. Good Friday was already as good as complete.

As God had delivered and saved the nation of Israel from pharaoh and Egypt through the hands and works of Moses, God Himself came in the flesh to reconcile us back to Himself. Christ and Him crucified for our sins and risen for our salvation is for Peter, the other 11 disciples, it is also for you.

The same gifts Jesus fed the twelve during the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus continues to feed you and I every Sunday through His Word and Sacrament. The Gospel is proclaimed into our ears and minds. We are taken back to our baptism where we shared in Christ’s death and were raised with Him by His resurrection. There we were given the same gifts we live and rejoice in, hearing the Gospel. But the Gospel is not Jesus.

As Doctor Luther says, “The Gospel is not Christ.” The Gospel is the proclamation of Christ. The proclamation of Christ is the proclamation of the cross, the proclamation of the cross for you, Jesus “**who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification**”(Romans 4:25).

The Gospel is thus the delivery of the cross and with it all that was there achieved for you that day long ago. But, we are not back there. Nor do we need to try and attempt to get back there with some sort of getting contemporary with it.

We don’t have to get back to Calvary because our Lord Jesus Christ is not back there today either, but here, where He is having His words spoken, the words that deliver Him to you.

Doctor Luther said if you want your sins forgiven, don’t go to Calvary. There on the cross forgiveness was won for you, but there on the cross it is not given out to you. If you want the forgiveness of sins you go to where Jesus promises to be: you go to the Lord’s Supper. There in the Lord’s Supper forgiveness is not won for you, but there it is most definitely given out to you.

Just as Jesus came to His disciples, chose them, made them His own, taught them by and through His Word, and fed them His own body and blood, Jesus continues to do the same for you. He found you, made you His own through the waters of holy Baptism, teaches you by His revealed Word of Scripture, and continues to feed you with nothing but the best, Jesus gives you all of Himself in the Lord’s Supper.

So while we sit with Peter, deserving nothing from God but His wrath for our cowardice in the face of opposition, our unfaithfulness to His Word, and for all our sins against God and our neighbours, Christ Jesus continues to come to us bringing His gifts of faith, forgiveness, and deliverance. He does this where He promises to be: “**where two or more are gathered in His name**”(Matthew 18:20): namely in the Divine Service around His Word and Sacrament. Here through hearing and eating the Holy Spirit works in us to plant, strengthen, and grow faith and trust in Christ Jesus and His work of redemption for us and in our place. Christ Jesus delivered to you for you for the forgiveness of all Peter’s sins, for all your sins. Amen.

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