

Maundy Thursday

"Lent 2018 – The Battles of Lent"

The Second Battle of the Upper Room
Text: Mark 14:17-25

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours through the suffering and death Jesus Christ, who gave his life that we might live, and who now continues to give us his body and blood so that we might never doubt the forgiveness, and therefore also the *life*, that is now ours through faith in that same Lord Jesus. Amen.

The text for this Maundy Thursday service is found recorded in the Gospel of Mark, the 14th Chapter, beginning with the Verse 17:

ESV **Mark 14:17-25** *And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18 And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" 20 He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." 22 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." 23 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24 And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."*

This is God's Word, the verbally inspired words by which our Savior-God will fill and strengthen us this evening. Asking him simply to do just that, so we pray, "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth.**" Amen.

This evening – as part of our Lenten preparation and self-examination – we are returning to a battle site that we first visited on Ash Wednesday – the Upper Room. Then we recognized that place as the site of Jesus' struggle against self-service. Tonight we acknowledge another battle that took place there – our Savior's battle against doubt.

What a fascinating study we find in our text for this special Maundy Thursday evening. Here, once again, we find uncertainty in man, but rock solid confidence in connection with the Son of Man.

When Jesus revealed to his disciples that one of them was about to betray him, they all responded in a most interesting way: "**Is it I?**" The English here does not do justice to what the men really said. More accurately, they said to Jesus, "**Surely it is not I, is it?**" The implication was that the men did not believe that they would do such a thing, or that they were capable of such an obvious and despicable act of treachery, yet past lessons had taught them to be very skeptical of their own strength and fidelity. Too many times they had failed. Too many times they had made noble resolutions, only to find that they were not strong enough to follow through on their claims. Their response was also tempered by their implicit trust in the truth of whatever Jesus said to them. If Jesus said that one of them would betray him, then one of them *would* betray him. The only question that remained was just who it would be.

Try to put this situation into practical, personal terms. The deed Jesus was foretelling was shocking to these men, yet they believed that it would actually come to pass because Jesus said it would. Maybe we can better bring this situation to life by making it more personal. Imagine if Jesus were to appear before you on this evening and reveal to you that someone in this room was about to murder his own child or parent. Imagine the revulsion you would feel, along with the certainty that it would not be you. Now consider that the Apostles (other than Judas) loved Jesus so much that they were willing to sacrifice all for the privilege of serving as one of his chosen men. Their love and devotion for Jesus therefore exceeded their love for their own families. Thus they absolutely could not *imagine* betraying the one they held so dear. Yet as certain as they were that the betrayer would be someone else, they were not altogether certain, were they? Why? They had learned (the hard way) not to trust themselves. So they couched their horror at the very thought of betraying their Lord with a, "**Surely I wouldn't do such a thing, would I?**"

This is actually a very healthy respect that we all ought to harbor towards the evil that resides in our own hearts. The very same evil that called for Jesus' crucifixion, and then ridiculed him mercilessly as he hung helpless and dying on the cross – that same evil is living and active in every human heart. Like the disciples, we too should never underestimate the level of evil of which we are all capable.

Unfortunately, the Apostles were not consistent in this regard. Immediately following the words recorded in our text, Jesus went on to explain that not only would one of them betray him, *every single one of them* would abandon him in his coming hour of need. We read their

reaction in Mark 14:29-31, "**Peter said to him, 'Even though they all fall away, I will not.'** ...he said emphatically, '**If I must die with you, I will not deny you.**' And they all said the same." We know, however, the story as it actually unfolded.

What does this lesson teach us about the event we celebrate this evening – Maundy Thursday and the institution of the Lord's Supper? It teaches us that our Lord not only knew that the unfounded overconfidence that he saw in his Apostles was going to be a problem for every generation, he knew that another enemy would stalk his lambs – especially when their overconfidence turned to failure and sin: *doubt*. He knew that his Church was going to be populated by fallible sinners who really had no concept of the sheer power of the evil forces that would be mustered against them. He knew that weak, prideful sinners would fail, and when they did they would desperately need strengthening and assurance. He knew that you and I would need the strength and confidence that only he could give. So it is that as we visit the Upper Room this evening, we recognize it as the site of Jesus' battle against doubt.

When you stop to think about it, how many elements of the Christian faith are actually tangible? Can you see or touch *faith*? Can you physically handle *hope*, or *grace*, or *justification*? Obviously not. For almost 2000 years the Church has been populated by those who never saw the Savior with their own eyes, never heard his voice, never heard the preaching of Peter or Paul and never experienced an obvious miracle like the feeding of the 5000 or the raising of a dead man.

In Holy Communion, Jesus created an exception to that rule. With the words recorded in our text, he assured us – made a *promise* to us – that every single time we celebrate the Lord's Supper we would receive something tangible – his true body and blood. Note well what he tells us here. He does not say, "*This represents my body... this symbolizes my blood...*" He says, "***This is my body... this is my blood...***" We take Jesus at his word, for our Lord always means what he says and says what he means. Every time we commune, we receive the very same body and blood that won the payment for the sins of the world.

All of this is meant to remind us, again and again, of just why the Lord's Supper is such a tremendous source of confidence and certainty for us, how and why it is such a powerful antidote to doubt. It was intended to be a source of strength and confidence, and that, when we rightly understand it, is exactly what it will be.

Can you see from this just how profoundly sinful and utterly shameful it is to pervert any part of the Lord's great gift to the Church on Maundy

Thursday? Yet it is safe to say that more Christians today *misunderstand* Holy Communion than truly understand it. This misunderstanding takes two forms, though both share a common error.

The one group treats the Lord's Supper as a simple memorial feast – as though the Lord's statement, "***This do in remembrance of me***" is the sum total of the sacrament. They believe that Jesus here did not offer an invitation, he established another commandment: "*Thou shalt hold a memorial feast from time to time so that you do not forget me.*" Such a view portrays Jesus as some sort of attention-starved juvenile who begs his friends – even commands them – not to forget him once he is gone. They thus pervert the Lord's Supper into something that man must now do for God, rather than an occasion where God does something for man. The result is the creation of doubt – the exact opposite of what Jesus intended. "*Am I adequately keeping this new commandment?*" "*Am I investing enough emotion?*" "*Is there something more that I need to be doing?*" "*Do I really stand holy and sinless in God's sight, or do I need to do something more?*"

When Jesus said "***This do in remembrance of Me***" he was referring not to some fond memory he wants us to carry in our hearts. He was talking about the confidence he wanted us to gain every single time we received his true body and blood, remembering just exactly what he did for us by giving this body and shedding this blood on the cross of Calvary. With that Good Friday gift of his body and blood, Jesus won our full and complete forgiveness. With his body and blood he paid the debt of every single sin ever committed by mankind. *This* is what we are supposed to bring to mind every time we commune – not that Jesus was a good guy, but that his sacrifice secured our forgiveness – once and for all.

The other group that sorely abuses the truth of Holy Communion teaches their people that they earn their own forgiveness, at least in part, by their communing. For them it is a straight business deal. You sin, you owe a debt. You commune, and you pay at least a part of that debt. Scripture nowhere teaches that we earn forgiveness by communing. It teaches instead that Christ Jesus earned our forgiveness by giving his body and shedding his blood. Again, what a shameful disgrace to our Lord's gift of forgiveness when mankind presumes to be able to earn for himself that same forgiveness by his actions. If this were in fact possible, then we don't need Christ. God could have just prescribed a certain series of rituals and good deeds and spared his Son the humiliation of life as a human being and the agony of the cross. The scriptural truth is that Jesus alone could *and did* make satisfaction

for our sins. His simple statement from the cross, "***It is finished!***" certifies that nothing whatsoever is left for man to add or complete.

Both of these perversions share a common thread. In the view of each, it is mankind who does something (for God or for self) in the Lord's Supper. Just the opposite is true. Here it is *God* who does something for *sinners*. Both perversions turn the very gift that God gave us to instill peace and confidence into yet another reason to doubt, to question, to fear. The very gift that was to tell us, in that special way, "***You are forgiven!***" causes us to doubt whether we really are.

In the Lord's Supper our God offers us confidence and assurance that the full debt of all of our sins has already been paid, and that full payment is our own personal possession through faith. In the Upper Room he thereby delivered a mighty blow to doubt. In fact, here's a general rule that we can carry with us every time we approach the Lord's Table: *If the Lord's Supper creates any doubt for you, you are thinking wrongly about this great gift.* If you come with a repentant heart, if you believe that Jesus earned forgiveness for all of your sins on the cross, and if you believe that you here receive his true body and blood, then there should be nothing but peace and comfort for you in the sacrament. You cannot, under those circumstances, receive this gift to your harm. God has already given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:57) Jesus' goal in the Upper Room was to defeat doubt, not create it.

Who then should come to the Lord's Table? Who should seek the gift that the Lord here offers? Recognizing his true body and blood, all who are weak and burdened with the guilt of sin; all who feel the pressure of evil and sin in their lives; all who lack the confidence they so desperately want to feel in their hearts. Here our sin is not removed; here we are told that that sin is already gone – forgiven. So then here our Jesus beckons us, "***Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*** ²⁹ ***Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.***" God, in Christ, has already forgiven all of our sins. May that same God grant to each of us the peace and confidence he offers us in this sacrament.
Amen.

The Christian Questions - Preparation for Holy Communion

Pastor: Do you believe that you are a sinner?

Congregation: Yes, I believe that I am a sinner.

Pastor: How do you know this?

Congregation: From the Words of Scripture, for I have not loved my God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength; and I have not loved my neighbor as myself.

Pastor: Are you sorry for your sins?

Congregation: Yes, I am sorry that I have sinned against God.

Pastor: What have you deserved from God because of your sins?

Congregation: I deserve his wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation.

Pastor: Do you hope to be saved?

Congregation: Yes, such is my hope.

Pastor: In whom, then, do you trust?

Congregation: I trust in my Lord Jesus Christ, who died to pay for my sins.

Pastor: How do you know that Christ died to pay for your sins?

Congregation: I know this from the Holy Gospel and from the words of the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Pastor: Hear now those words of institution from Matthew 26:26-28: *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

Pastor: Do you believe, then, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament?

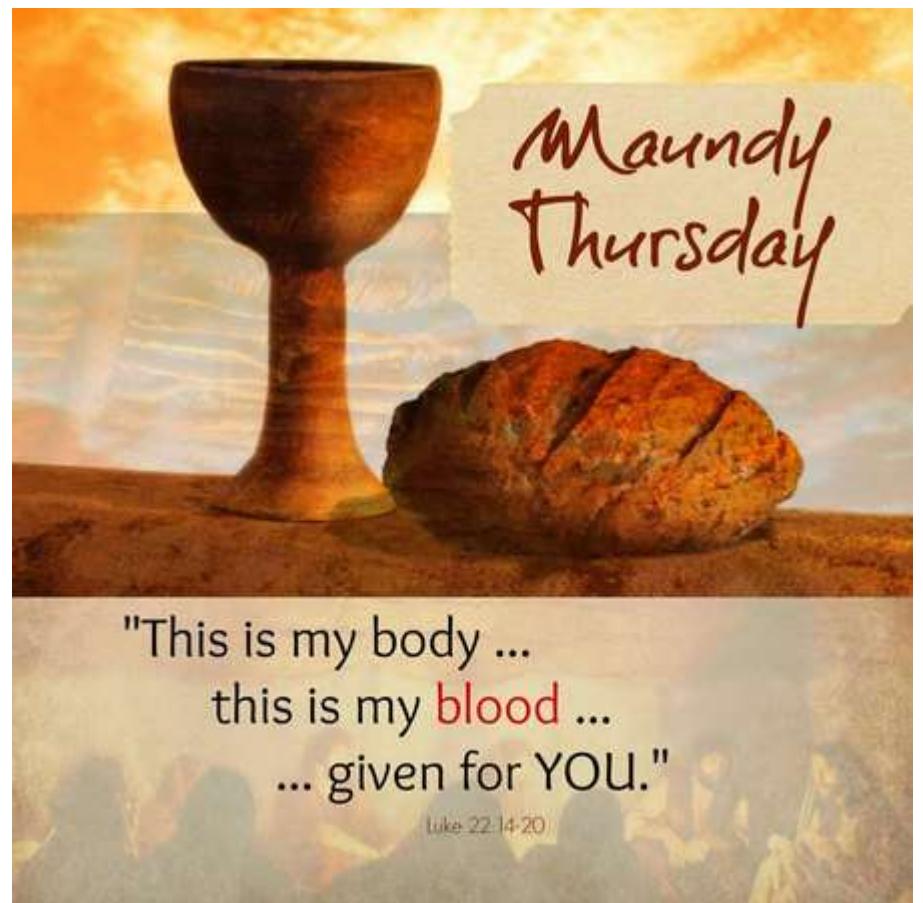
Congregation: Yes, I believe the words of Christ, "Take and eat. This is my body... Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the New Covenant..."

Pastor: Finally, why do you desire to receive Holy Communion?

Congregation: To be personally comforted, strengthened, and assured that Christ, out of great love, died also for my sins.

Pastor: May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

All: (Spoken) O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us, and grant us Thy peace. Amen.



St Paul Lutheran Church

**Maundy Thursday Service
March 29, 2018**

ST PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E Divide Ave Bismarck, ND 58501

Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mark Johnson – President

Eileen McEnroe – Head Organist

Michael Roehl – Pastor

Maundy Thursday Service - 2018

The Opening Hymn – 306 (Stanzas 1-4)

Invocation

Pastor: *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

All: *(Spoken) Amen.*

Confession and Absolution (TLH 323)

Pastor: *Acknowledging that we stand in the presence of our Holy God we humble ourselves, and in true repentance, we confess our sins:*

All:

1. With broken heart and contrite sigh, a trembling sinner, Lord, I cry.
Thy pardoning grace is rich and free - O God, be merciful to me.
2. I smite upon my troubled breast, with deep and conscious guilt oppressed;
Christ and His cross my only plea – O God, be merciful to me.
3. Nor alms nor deeds that I have done can for a single sin atone.
To Calvary alone I flee – O God, be merciful to me.

Pastor: *Jesus Christ himself has been punished for your sins. God the Father has placed upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. According to His authority, and by His command, I announce to you the divine decree of our God that all of your sins are forgiven, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

All: And when, redeemed from sin and hell, with all the ransomed throng I dwell,
My blissful song shall ever be: God has been merciful to me.

The Reading of the Passion History

The Apostolic Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Pre Sermon Hymn – 163 (Stanzas 1-4)

The Sermon – *The theme for our devotions this Lenten Season is "The Battles of Lent"*

This evening: The Second Battle of the Upper Room
- *The Battle Against Doubt*

The Response – The Offertory (Supplement page 16)

The Prayer of the Day

The Lord's Prayer

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 163 (Stanzas 5-9)

The Preparation for Holy Communion (*The Christian Questions*)

The Distribution

The Benediction

P: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God the Father,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

C: *Amen, Amen, Amen. (Sung by all)*

The Closing Hymn - 659

Silent Prayer

Announcements

[All are invited to remain for fellowship and light refreshments.]