

Grace Lutheran Church @ Wichita, Kansas

8-24-14 Day of St. Bartholomew

“The One Who Serves” Text: Luke 22:24-30

Pastor Michael Brockman

*In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

Could you think of a more unlikely place for an argument to arise than around the table where the Lord’s Supper had its origins? But it happened. An argument. At the Table where the Lord Jesus first served His Body and Blood.

The argument? Which of the twelve apostles was the greatest!

- Was Peter the greatest, the one who some months previous has walked on water?
- Was the greatest James or was brother John greater, both of whom were present at one of Jesus’ magnificent gold-medal events—His transfiguration?
- Was the greatest Apostle Bartholomew, better known as Nathaniel, whose purity of character was affirmed by Jesus when He said of Bartholomew, “An Israelite in whom there is no guile!”?

Who was the greatest of the Twelve? This was a hot-blooded quarrel, a dispute, a family feud. Good money would bet that sharp words, sarcasm and hurt feelings were all part of the evening of that Passover in Jerusalem.

It’s hard to believe that at such a solemn setting as the Passover, an argument of this nature would have ensued. These twelve men eating with Jesus had just received unleavened bread over which Jesus had proclaimed, “This is My Body, which is given for you.” These twelve men had just received wine over which Jesus had proclaimed, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My Blood.” Forgiveness of their sins had just been received and here the twelve are arguing. Were these men even Christians? Maybe they were all hypocrites, like Judas!

Reading St. Luke’s ordering of events in this Gospel text—used today for the celebration of the beloved Apostle Bartholomew—we see how the argument of the Apostles followed on the heels of Jesus revealing that He was going to be betrayed—betrayed by one of the twelve men who sat at the table with Him. Now, you can begin to understand their consternation, their discomfort with this announcement. “What? One of us is being singled out by Jesus as a betrayer, an evil person. It must not be me. It must be one of those other eleven.” Each *lord apostle* would have thought himself above betrayal! “I’m too good. I’m too great. I love Jesus too much to betray Him.”

You and I know the truth. Of the twelve, Judas was the Betrayer. The other eleven were off the hook.....for this sin. But, they were not off the hook as sinners; not off the hook in thinking one was better or more important than another; not off the hook of lording over another. And they certainly would betray Jesus by fleeing from His crucifixion, His hour of greatest need.

And yes, we've been there ourselves. We've committed these 'lording over others' sins. We have all privately entertained thoughts that we are kings or queens of our own little hills. We have all entertained thoughts that we are lords of some domain. The home. The playground. The corner of the four-way stop when four cars arrive at the same time. The Voters' Meeting. The weekly gathering with the office staff. A reunion with old friends where we out-boast them about our kids.

We love to think Jesus would tell us as He told Bartholomew, “You have no guile. You never engage in misrepresenting the truth. You never quibble or mock or cheat or embellish. You are a Christian in whom there is no deceit!”

Wrong. Get over yourself. Repent. Jesus has not spoken that way to us. Instead, He tells us not to be wise in our own eyes. Turn away from evil, turn away from the lordly egotism of self and come to Him, the meek and mild one. “I am your Lord,” Jesus declares. Fear Me. Trust Me. You, as wanna-be-lords, do not know how to rule your own life, let alone others. Can you relieve your physical pains? Can you feed your spiritual hungers? Can you quench your deep-seated longings? You do not even know how to find Me or come to Me by yourself. You are lost. You are trapped. Your wanting to be lord, beguiles you.

The Real Lord, Jesus says, “I chose you. I called you. I bring you into a new life through holy, living waters. I give you My Spirit. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. I promise that you will never perish, that you will live forever.”

This is the work of your Good Lord Jesus. This Lord took on a most oppressive, shameful job. He died for you. He laid down His life for you. It wasn't in vain. It wasn't for nothing. It was for your salvation. So that you could escape death and the eternal oppression of Satan. Jesus laid down His life, took it up again, and promises that where He is, you shall be. Jesus serves you.

It is His nature. It is what He does. It is as Bartholomew saw when certain disciples of Jesus were fishing on the Sea of Galilee after Jesus' resurrection. Fishing all night. Catching nothing. Suddenly Jesus is on shore. He hollers, “Have you caught

anything?” They answer no. Jesus serves. He commands the net to be thrown on the other side of the boat. The catch was so large, the seven men couldn't pull up the net. When they finally got ashore, Jesus had provided them with more.....a morning breakfast—fish and bread. Bartholomew and his six companions knew who it was that provided and served them. It was the Lord Jesus, the One who had originally come from Nazareth, the very town of which Bartholomew once wondered, “What good can come from Nazareth?”

And now this Lord says to you and me, “Come, eat My Flesh and drink My Blood. My Flesh is food indeed and My Blood is drink indeed. He who feeds on Me will live because of Me.” Jesus serves. At His Altar. With His gifts.

Jesus serves. It is His nature. Back at the Passover table, Bartholomew saw this low, humble, spirit of Jesus. Jesus took up the job of washing twelve pair of dirty, stinking feet before the meal. Though cherubim honor Jesus and seraphim laud Him and the sun, moon and stars praise Him, Jesus serves mankind.

What's the lowest, dirtiest, most humiliating job you have had to do for others?

- Take out the mouse trap for your wife?
- Clean and sanitize the floor where someone vomited?
- Pick-up the dirty plates and grubby napkins at the Lord's Diner?
- Plunge the toilet that someone else plugged?

St. Paul would tell you, as he did the Christians at Philippi....*do all things without complaining and disputing that you may become blameless and harmless children of God without fault.*

Jesus took on our human flesh and then suffered and died for sins. For the sin of His arguing apostles, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew and the other nine guys. They wanted to be lords rather than servants. Jesus suffered and died for their sins and yours; for all the times you would rather be proud, pompous lords than little, servant Christs. For you, Jesus humbled Himself, becoming the lowest of the low and the ugliest of the ugly. A sinner, that is. God made Jesus to be sin even though He knew none.

So, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. IJN. Amen.