

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle
Maundy Thursday
28 March 2013
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Lk 22:7-20

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

As you know, today we celebrate the institution of the blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus.

And even though the Supper is preached often;
it's good to set aside a special day to consider it's beginning, it's *institution*.

The text from Luke's Gospel describes the night Jesus was betrayed.

It's a scene from the Passover celebration, which Moses commanded back in Exodus. On the evening of the 14th day of the first month, the Jews were to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Passover, which lasts 7 days. They were to rid their homes of all leaven, and for one week eat only unleavened bread—*matzo*. On the first day of this feast, they were also to eat the paschal, or, Passover lamb.

This is what Jesus and His 12 are celebrating on this particular evening. Jesus had even said,

*"I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.
For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."* (Lk 22:15-16)

Jesus means that this is the last Passover.
Not just *His* last Passover—not just *His* last supper—
but this is the end of all Passovers
(which is why it's not best to celebrate Maundy Thursday with a Seder feast).

For with this Passover, the Old Testament Passover,
along with the Priesthood,
the Kingdom,
the Temple,
and the Worship,
all come to an end!

At this meal, Jesus ends a 1500 year custom, and begins something entirely *new*.
One covenant comes to a close;
a New covenant, a New Testament, has its foundation—it's *institution*.

That's why Jesus is so eager to eat this meal with these 12.
For what happens at this meal will forever change the life and faith of God's people.

Now this Passover meal was a meal of remembrance.
They would hear the stories of old:
they'd tell again of the time in Egypt—their bondage and slavery;
of Moses and the miracles done before Pharaoh; and they'd remember his hard heart;
of the blood on the door posts, the unleavened bread,

the eating and drinking with shoes on their feet and staff in their hand;
 they'd hear of the fear being trapped between the sea and the army—
 and of Moses' staff splitting the waters and leading them across dry land;
 and then the Song of Moses, sung at the drowning of the Egyptian armies,
 and the deliverance of the people of Israel.

It was a night of remembrance.

Not that they were there, or could try to imagine it by picturing it real hard;
 but they remembered by *hearing*;
 and by hearing, they participated, they joined in the saving event of the Exodus.

Moses says to the generation about to enter the promised land:
*"The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.
 Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant,
 but with us, who are all of us here alive today."* (Deut 5:2-3)

That's what remembering does—
 it joins you to the promise—even if you weren't there.
 And in that way, you participate with all who hear the promise.

And so, on this Maundy Thursday, the remembrance and the participation *changes*.
 No longer are they to participate in the countless sacrifices,
 the Kingdom, the priesthood, the Temple, or the Passover.

All that Moses spoke now comes to an end.

*"And Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them saying,
 'This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.'
 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying,
 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.'"* (Lk 22:19)

With those words everything changed.

Bread became body; wine became blood.
 The Old was gone, the New has come.

This we believe because that's what Jesus said.
 Against all rhyme and reason, we cling to the words of Jesus.
 Our Lord's words and works aren't to be measured or subject to what makes sense to us.
 He always accomplishes and does what He says.
 Word and Work always go together.

We might not know how it works;
 and our eyes and mouth and nose might tell us otherwise—
 that's okay.

What matters is that it *is*; that Jesus *is* for us.

That's the institution of the Lord's Supper.
 That's Maundy Thursday.
 He took bread; He took wine;
 but what He gave was His body and His blood, *for us!*

We, who weren't there, are called to remember, to participate, to receive these gifts,
 and by them, be joined to the Christ who gives them.

And it's all for joy.

But the joy comes when what is given is believed to be for me.

This supper of the very flesh and blood of Jesus isn't any good for you if you haven't got any sin.
 In fact, this meal will bring judgment on you;
 if you think you're doing fairly well and don't need forgiveness today, don't come.

This meal is for sinners only.
 It's for those who really suffer,
 who know their guilt and shame,
 who can't get rid of their troubled past, or their constant hatred,
 who bury things deep inside and hope it'll all go away—
 this meal is for them.
 And that means it's for you.

Don't try to clean yourself up before coming—
 don't wait until you get your house in order—
 come to the table;
 come to the body given for you and the blood shed for your forgiveness;
 come now!

For you who see and know and hate your sin;
 who know what you deserve and what you don't deserve—
 this meal is for you.
 It's a medicine of immortality; the cure for the plague of death;
 it's the delicious taste of heaven, given to you now as sustenance for the journey.

Our lives are broken, unsatisfying, and full of fear.
 Our faith stumbles, our worship and prayers falter.
 Our love for our family and friends, not to mention our enemies, is weak and cold.

But this is the feast that casts out fear.
 It mends your wounds, heals your diseases, and gives you life from the dead!
 It strengthens your faith, and prompts your love.
 This Supper is Jesus for you.
 Come; take and eat; and do this all in remembrance of Him.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit