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Maundy Thursday

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Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita

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

“You are what you eat.”

This joking cliché is one of the profoundest theological statements we could make.

Being Maundy Thursday and all, you know where I’m going with this.

But getting there is the fun part!

It all begins in the Garden.

Man was created to eat.

“*And God said,*

‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.’ (Gen 1:29)

Man must eat in order to live.

He must take the world into his body and transform it into himself.

And the whole world is open to him as a banquet.

That’s how it was intended to be.

And that’s how it’ll be on the last day.

Isaiah gives us a glimpse of this sumptuous vision:

“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.” Isa 25:6

Food is life, and life is food—and you don’t need to be a foodie to think so!

But food isn’t life in itself.

In fact, it’s only this side of the fall that we think of food apart from God.

That is, it’s our sin that leads us to separate the spiritual from the material.

We think of food as profane, common, and something simply to be consumed.

We don’t see it’s spiritual benefits or how it might relate to our soul.

But the Bible doesn’t give food in that way.

Food isn’t neutral.

Man was created hungry.

And God gave him food.

And He did so in order to have communion with man.

God gave the world to man so they could have communion together.

Man’s hunger was satisfied by the gifts of God.

So food was hardly immaterial.

But man’s hunger was ultimately for God Himself.

His desire and love was for God.

And God’s love and desire was for man.

That’s the communion that goes on in Eden.

That is, until another food comes on the scene.

The fall from Paradise is centered on food.

That one tree’s fruit was unlike every other fruit in the Garden: *it wasn’t given as a gift to man.*

It was the only food whose eating would bring about condemnation, judgment, death, and the end of communion with God.

In this fall, communion was cut off with God and turned in on itself.
 Man now sought to satisfy his hunger with himself.
 He loves himself; he desires what's good for himself;
 and fights against any intruders, seeking entrance into this self-communion.

God's answer to this self-communion isn't to say, "*fine, have it your way.*"
 It breaks His heart not having communion with His beloved.
 His desire is for them, though they don't desire Him in return.

His solution, knowing that *man is what he eats*, is to feed us with Himself.
 Rather than our continual feeding upon the food that wasn't given—
 our self-centeredness, our pride, our self-love and hatred towards others—
 He would give us His own body and blood to eat.

And to do that, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to the cross.
 Maundy Thursday is the remembrance of that life-changing; world changing meal.
 For on that night our food was transformed.
 On that night bread became body and wine became blood.
 And with the death and resurrection of Jesus, food became once again the gift of God.

Certainly, this primary food-gift of God is the Holy Supper.
Here we gather to eat His body and drink His blood and thus become what we eat!
Here we share in His divinity and participate in Him.
Here Eden is restored, our communion with God is as it was intended to be--*here* at this altar.

But what happens at this altar—the changing of bread and wine into body and blood—
 also has its effects in this world.

And I don't just mean that we now pray before meals—
 though we do that, recognizing all food as gift from the Father's hand—
 but that we are also transformed.

We're not just material things—an arbitrary construction of atoms—
 we are, in fact, God's means of communing with this world.

The Sacrament of the Altar turns us into sacraments for the world.
 We are to be gifts of God, given and shed for the life of the world.
 We're to offer ourselves to our neighbors, to suffer and die for them that they might also live.

That's the joy of the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, this Maundy Thursday:
 God gifts us with Himself to restore communion between heaven and earth.
 And He'll even use us for the sake of the world.

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