

Holy Week in Biblical Perspective
Maundy Thursday
“The Lord’s Table for the Lord’s People”
Matthew 26:26–35
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April 2, 2015 – Maundy Thursday Sermon

Let’s start by looking at Matthew 26:26–35 which says [26] *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” [27] And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, [28] for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. [29] I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”*

[30] And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. [31] Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ [32] But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” [33] Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” [34] Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” [35] Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word, inerrant and infallible, be preached for you.

This single supper of the Lord whereby He gives the last Passover and institutes the first Lord’s Supper of which we will eat of Him and drink of Him until He comes again but He will not be here to eat and drink with us except by the presence of His Holy Spirit, because He has ascended into heaven upon His resurrection and ascension. Then we will eat it afresh and anew when we sit down at another supper, the marriage supper of the Lamb in that day and we will enjoy it together. But as He comes to this table He does three things and after I give you these three I’ll give just one single thought.

He takes the bread. He takes the cup. He gives the bread. He gives the cup. He blesses the bread. He blesses the cup. He takes. He gives and then He blesses. When He takes the bread He says ‘this is My body given for you’ and the reason He is able to do that is because He has taken a body unto Himself. When He goes to the cross not many hours after this, He will take our sins upon His body. He takes the cup because He will take the cup of God’s wrath that was due to us when He goes to the cross. When He takes the cup He says ‘this is the cup is the New Covenant in My blood shed for the forgiveness of the sins of many’ because when He goes to the cross He will take the cup of the wrath of God for our sins and will drink it. Then He gives them a cup to drink from that is of glorious life as we drink of Him. Then He blesses which means He consecrates or gives thanks, the bread and the cup.

In other words, He is giving thanks to the Lord that He has been sent and He has come to take our sins in His body and to take the wrath of God that was due to us. That is so far beyond any thought that I can muster that He is giving thanks for the body He has taken and the sins He will take upon it and He is giving thanks for the cup of God’s

wrath that He is about to drink so that He who takes that can give to us the gift of salvation and the forgiveness of our sins. So should not we take our life that has been purchased by Christ and give it back to Him? Should we not take, give and bless His Holy Name?

My dear friends, as much as I would love to just sit and think about that for some time and work our way through it, I want to go to one little aspect as we work our way through the text. Just as they leave there they sing a hymn just as we will do. They left just as we will do and as they leave He informs them that something is about to happen and they will all flee. When He, the Shepherd, gets struck down as He takes our sins and goes to the cross, takes the judgment of God, at that point at the hands of sinful men, the disciples will flee from Him. He says 'you're all going to abandon Me.' The Shepherd will get struck down and the sheep, which is you, will scatter. Peter of course says 'no, not me, Lord.' He says to Peter, 'Before the cock crows, you'll deny Me three times.'

Before we pile on Peter too much, you'll notice that the text says that the rest of them said the same thing. There is no human resolve that will keep you faithful to Jesus without the power of God in your life. That doesn't mean we don't resolve or we don't make commitments or that we're not intentional but I love the way our church vows says it. With humble reliance upon Divine grace and the power of the Holy Spirit I will endeavor but I will not endeavor in my own strength. I will endeavor in the strength that He supplies.

There is no place other than this night that you see the full deity of Christ, 100 percent God, and the full humanity of Christ. His humanity was not a charade. He was truly a Man with all of the emotional, psychological and frailties that come in this broken world when you become full humanity. There is no place you see it more than after He warns them as He deals with His own soul and heart. How many times have I laid in bed and thought 'Jesus You are the way, the truth and the life and I have made my whole commitment that I need a Savior. I can't save myself and You are the only Savior but Jesus is this really the only way it could be done?'

When I first became a Christian there was a spiritual father/mentor I had and I remember going to his house after Sunday evening church as was my habit and I had my 38 questions, at least, every Sunday night for him. I asked Harold one time "Why didn't God just put a button and everyone who wanted to be saved just go press the button?" He would patiently explain to me that there was only one way that a Holy God could be just and justify sinners and that is if He sent His Son to take our sins upon Himself and take our wrath, so that He is now able to forgive us because His Son had paid the penalty. If you have ever asked the question 'couldn't there have been another way' don't feel bad because Jesus asked the same question. You see His full humanity at that moment.

It deserves a lot more treatment than the one single thing that I want you to think about but I want to keep reading where I left off. Matthew 26:36–40 says [36] *Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."* [37] *And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (James and John), he began to be sorrowful and troubled.* [38] *Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."* [39] *And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

Do you get the picture here? They came across the Kidron Brook and they are in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus says “I need to pray. Peter, James and John come with Me. I want you all to stay here and pray and I am going to go a little bit further and pray.” In the privacy and angst of all the humanity that is there He calls upon His Father for He has now come to the hour and purpose of His incarnation in His life. That is to go to the cross to save those whom the Father has given to Him so that He would not lose one of them. Knowing the cup He is about to drink for He is about to take sin which He hates upon Himself and about to drink the cup of God’s wrath and the Father for whom He had fellowship with for all eternity is now about to no longer say ‘this is My Son in whom I am well pleased’ for He is now to turn Himself and crush His Son with His wrath. As Jesus comes to this moment He cries out to the Father, “*My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, still surrendered, still submitted but as you will.*”

Matthew 26:40–42 says [40] *And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? [41] Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* He is not only speaking of their inability. They want to pray with Him but they are not ready and practiced to pray with Him. He is telling them something about Himself, ‘I am willing to go to that cross, but oh the weakness of this human body in anticipating what I am about to endure for My people.’

John 26:42 says [42] *Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”* Do you see the movement of the prayer request the second time? The first time it was if there is any other way You can redeem these people without Me doing this, would You do that way, but Your will be done, and when He comes back the second time He now affirms that if there is no other way which there is not, then Father Your will be done.

John 26:43–46 says [43] *And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. [44] So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. [45] Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. [46] Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”* You see all His humanity as He wrestles through this.

So what is it that we know? All you believers live in a world that is scandalized by two things. One is the notion that we’re sinners and we can’t save ourselves and our religion can’t save us. You live in a world that is scandalized by the message that Jesus Christ saves but only Jesus Christ saves. When you take that message to this world and the world responds against it, you who have been saved because He did the one thing, only thing and only way to get us right with God, then you with humility but courage tell the world there is no other way. But we have Good News for our Savior drank the cup so that when there was no way He made a way, the only way and He is the way, the truth and the life.

Not only would I ask you with humility and courage to go and tell this world that there is a Savior who offers to you the cup of life, the cup of an unfathomable life forever with your Savior because you have put your trust in Him. The reason you take the cup is because He took the cup of the unendurable wrath of God crying out, [46b] *saying, “Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*

(Matthew 27:46b) He drank it to the bottom and if not one drop of the cup of God's wrath ingested by our Savior on that cross then we could not have been saved. I know He drank it to the bottom because He then said "It is finished!" for the cup had been drained. Dare I press the picture? The Son drank the cup and the Father kept tipping it up so that every drop of His wrath against sin would be drunk by His Son so that you would have a cup of life in Him.

So as you come to the Table I want you to know there is no amphitheater seating in the Kingdom of God. Isn't it wonderful that you get lifted up when you go to those amphitheater movie theaters? I don't care who you are or who I am for we are all on level ground and we're all sinners saved by grace. You see a Table in which we all sit on level ground who are sinners saved by the loving obedience of Christ who took our sins, gave Himself, then blessed the Father even as He called out, 'Father if there is another way then let it be but if there is not, I surrender for I will drink the cup for My people.' There is no hierarchy in the Kingdom of God. We are sinners saved by grace and we sit at the Table on level ground but O we're all exalted by Christ. We will all be joint heirs with Him. We will all rule and reign with Him because we have the cup of life forevermore.

Dear friends, if you have given your life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior rejoice that your Savior gave Himself and took what you could not take to give you what you did not deserve so drink all of it for He purchased it for you. You do not come to a Table that pastors and elders stand in front of because you don't go through us to get this Table. You come to a Table through Jesus Christ who went to the cross that you might come to Him. Now come, eat and drink and see the Lord is good. You do not come to a Table that is elevated. You come to a Table that declares your Savior humbled Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross, and you can now come to this Table because He is exalted and you are in Him and He is in you.

Finally, as you come to this Table, please know that the Table is designed that you will fix your eyes on Jesus and rejoice in the cross for it is at the cross we were saved by His grace and His love, where the love of God met the holiness of God that we might know the joy of our God and live to the glory of God. He took. He gave and He blessed not only those elements but He has blessed you with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Now, bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we have to be together at our Lord's Table which is a Table that has no sacrifice, for our Savior has given Himself and taken upon Himself our sin. He took the cup You gave to Him of wrath that should have been ours and now He has taken bread and says 'Eat, this is My body given for you. Here is My cup, take and drink for My blood has been given for you.' Now Father, even as we come to the Table to take and eat and drink because of our Savior who gave, we now say to You, take my life and let it be holy, consecrated, Lord, to Thee. Here O Savior I would die to myself and I would give myself away to You, the One who purchased me, Christ our Lord. I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.