

Sermon Text for Maundy Thursday Service April 14, 2022

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Luke 22:14-20

“The body and blood of Jesus”

Welcome to Maundy Thursday service. Over time I get the question of why is it called Monday Thursday? They couldn't make up their mind? No, the word maundy comes from John where Jesus is at the Last Supper with his disciples and he washes their feet and he tell them: a new commandment I leave with you, that you love one another. The term new commandment in latin is *mandatum novum*, so the *mandatum*, the term commandment or covenant became over time, covenant or commandment Thursday which makes much more sense than the redundant and nonsensical Monday Thursday.

This evening we celebrate the new covenant that Jesus made with his disciples around the table on the last evening that he would ever spend with them before his death. That new covenant was meant to be lived out within community and so Jesus in the evening before his death created a new community that today we call the church. Normally I would say and both Scripture point to that new community or that new covenant, but here as we follow along with our 9 month challenge we only have one Scripture for this evening, and this one Scripture speaks very directly to the new community that Jesus created which has at its center the body and the blood of our Savior which he left for us as a sign and a seal of that covenant. Let's read

READ

On Tuesday evening I got home around 7pm and it was a stunning evening. I sat on my back porch preparing for this evening with the birds so loud I almost wanted to tell them to quiet down a bit, but it was beautiful, it was so peaceful, but I was tired. As I looked out at God's country my head was still spinning from the day's activities and scheduling, and I was tired. I'm not a fan of pity parties but if ever I wanted a pity party, it was that evening, Stacy was at work and here I was at home alone trying to get a sermon done after a long day at church.

But before the full pity party kicked in I thought about the exhaustion, the mental fatigue, the enormity of the things that Jesus had to deal with as he knew all things on that last evening while he was with his disciples. I can't even come close to understanding and I cranked it out in now time. I told myself to toughen up, so that was helpful. But we find ourselves at the very end of Jesus' life and all of it is coming to a head. The setting of these verses is crucial to

understand as we hear these verses which have been emblazoned on our Christian history and practice over the centuries. This is my body, this is my blood.

These words and these verses have a technical term to them in Christian parlance. They are called the words of institution. I know, that sounds very religious. Jesus didn't actually come to establish a religion, but that is what happened. There is no denying it and you can minimize it by saying I don't believe in a religion, I believe in a person. That is true, but our personal relationship with Jesus doesn't eliminate the fact that whether Jesus wanted to or not, he established a religion that has institution all over the world.

One of the unifying marks of this religion, of Christianity, is the Lord's Supper. All who would be identified as Christian, except in a very few rare cases, take part in the Lord's Supper and these words are used as the words of institution. Meaning it is here where Jesus begins, instituted, the Lord Supper by commanding us to take part in it over the centuries. And so we have and dozens of pastors have stood here in front of this congregation over its nearly 190 year history and have read the words of institution where Jesus tells us that this is his body and this is his blood. These words have institutionalized communion and we find these words in Matthew, Mark, Luke and I Corinthians, which is my favorite.

The words that Jesus uses are specific and have a purpose, they aren't random but rather chosen with a meaning. Look at these verses and you will find something interesting, you have wine, then bread, then wine again. You won't see that in any of the other Gospels. Why is that? We have our answer in vs.14 where we read that Jesus sits down at the Passover meal. Passover is one of the highest holy days in the Jewish calendar and there was an institutionalized way in which to celebrate Passover. It is a meal and in that meal which commemorates the passing over of the angel of death while the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, in that meal there are four glasses of wine that are drunk and bread that is eaten.

Jesus is with his disciples and they are celebrating one of the most holy evenings in Jewish life and Jesus is the rabbi with his disciples celebrating that meal. He tells them, but they didn't fully understand, that he so wanted to celebrate this Passover with them before he suffered. He tells them that as they take part in this meal they are to do it that evening as a recognition that they would remember it for the rest of their lives.

They would not eat this meal again until all of it is finished, accomplished, complete, fulfilled. Remember when we talked about it is finished and we explained how that term which Jesus expressed while he was on the cross really meant that all was not complete, the fulfillment

of Scripture in the death of Jesus was complete and his work on earth was done. They would not take part in this meal again until that happened. We know from Isaiah 53:12 that Jesus fulfilled this Scripture and his death was the completion of that Scripture, listen to these words.

But that evening he created something new, he created a covenant and a covenant people. Luke, more clearly than any other Gospel, has Judas receive the meal just as he provides forgiveness for a prodigal, tax collector, a dying thief, and those who would crucify him. Everyone is welcome to Jesus' table, just as everyone continues to be welcome to this table. It is as though, because of this last supper, no meal among disciples is just a meal any longer, because no loaf is just bread, and no cup is just wine.

Besides worship there is no more important thing that we do together as a church than have meals together. That is why we established the fellowship committee 8 years ago. We should eat together more than just twice a year, once at our birthday celebration in November and once at our church picnic in August. Because those who share in this covenant are joined to one another life to life, as signified and sealed in the cup divided among ourselves.

Jesus here addresses the disciples not in order to propose to them a definition of the bread which he had just broken and distributed, but to invite them to recognize in the bread shared his own body and to constitute in this way a community.

We are that community and we find ourselves looking to Jesus for so many answers, and those answers we will find in the body and the blood as we live our faith out together in our covenant community. May God bless this family as we look forward to this year to come. Amen.