

Maundy Thursday
28 March 2013
St. Luke 22:7-20

“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. . . . This cup is the new covenant (testament) in my blood which is poured out for you.”

Whose Words are these? They are not mine. They are not yours. They are the Lord's! The Words of the Lord who created everything by means of His Word! Through His speaking! His speaking that does and gives precisely what He says. Like at the beginning when He spoke ***“Let there be . . .”*** and there was light and everything in creation! This is the same Lord who speaks to the dead. Yes, that's right, He bosses around the deceased! ***“Talitha koum (Little girl get up!)”*** and, ***“Lazarus, come out!”***

Now on the night before He dies the Lord Jesus draws up His last will and testament. He is of sound mind. He is quite sober-minded. He knows what He is doing. Everything is very deliberate and in order. From the directions about all the preparations of the room to what He does and says regarding the Passover meal's bread and wine.

He tells you what it is. He preaches what He gives. What He says He gives! What He gives is what He says! Lord Jesus gets the first and last word! Not you! He has His say-so! Not you! **It is the Lord's Supper!** Not your Supper! He emphatically says that the Bread IS His Body. He definitively declares that the cup of Wine is His Blood. To be eaten and to be drunk with your mouth! And for this reason we have no doubt and we need never have any doubt that the Supper is what He says it is. It isn't what someone else thinks it might be. He says that it is Him in that Supper. And His body and blood gives the forgiveness of sins.

Out of the mouth of Lord – the Lord made flesh and dwelling among the people – are the Words of eternal life. God gave life by merely speaking the heavens and the earth into existence. God gave life to you and all that has breath by calling out and making it so. God's Word transforms lives, makes people live and for sure do what it says. God's Word says, this IS my body. God's Word says, This IS my blood. There can be no doubt that God means what He says. There can be no doubt what we get at this table.

There was no doubt what the disciples got – at that Last Supper – or that First Supper of the New Covenant that Jesus gave. At our snowy Palm Sunday Service, for those who were able to dig out and come to Church, I asked the question, could you imagine being there – along that road with palm branches hearing the shouts of Hosanna from the crowd? I ask again, could you imagine being there with our Savior in that upper room with His precious few hearing how our Lord makes Himself known for all generations starting on that day in the Supper we call the Lord's?

But even more, for those who sat in that upper room there was significance to everything they celebrated. The way they sat meant something to them and their Israelite forefathers who witnessed the first Passover, the passing over of the angel smiting all those homes in Egypt that did not have lambs blood painted on the doorposts. The way they drank meant something in the remembrance of this faithful day in Egypt. The way they passed the cup, the order in which they ate all called to mind something that was so very valuable to them. It called to mind their freedom from bondage and slavery and the promise land that God had given them.

No less than anything else was the significance that went with the “breaking of the bread.” Two blessings were used at the breaking of bread. The first blessing goes like this: ***“Blessed be Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who bringest forth from the earth.”***

The second one sounds like this: *“Blessed art Thou, our Father in heaven, who givest us today the bread necessary for us.”* On the table there lay three circles of unleavened bread. The middle one was taken and broken. At this point only a little was eaten. It was to remind the Jews of the bread of affliction that they ate in Egypt and it was broken to remind them that slaves had never a whole loaf, but only broken crusts to eat. As it was broken the head of the family said, *“This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whosoever is in need let him come and keep the Passover with us.”* (In the modern celebration in strange lands, here is added the famous prayer, *“This year we keep it here, next year in the land of Israel. This year as slaves, next year as free.”*)

And they indeed tasted their freedom as a result of the very first Passover. The Lord gave them freedom from bondage in Egypt. This was the way God’s people would celebrate this new found freedom for centuries. Not much had changed for years regarding the Passover – that is, until this faithful Passover celebration.

And just as the first Passover meal was the celebration of the freedom for the Egyptians that God gave to His people, His Passover meal today sets us free. It doesn’t set us free from any certain people. His Passover meal does not promise today that we will not have any troubles or that we won’t live life today like slaves. No, this freedom now given in today’s Passover meal gives a whole new freedom. This freedom is given in life eternal in heaven with our Lord.

You see the basic purpose of the Passover never really has changed. We still celebrate our freedom when we come to the table. It’s just that the freedom we talk about isn’t freedom from slavery, its freedom from death. It’s not freedom from a people like the Egyptians it’s freedom from the clutches of hell. What has changed about “the breaking of the bread” is now there is so much more. The gift the Lord has left us with since the Last Supper is forgiveness of sins through His institution of a new, far better meal. For this reason, I like to call the Last Supper, the First Supper. There are new gifts, and a new freedom won for us by Christ on the Cross.

With all that this Supper means to us, God has put us there. We are there with Him at the table. We are there with angels and the archangels and all the company of heaven. We are there and His Word, spoken from God’s mouth, makes all this happen for you. His Word spoken makes life come from nothing and little girls rise from the dead. His Word brings life from deadly cross to the table of blessing.

That’s where we go next. We are going to the table and then we are going to the cross. We will celebrate freedom with our Savior as He is placed in our mouths and in our souls, then we will weep for Him as He shows us how far He is willing to go for our Freedom. We thank God for His blessed freedom at this Passover meal. And we thank God He’s not finished. I thank God for tomorrow as well. Each day gets better for us. Each day Freedom is realized all the more. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.