

April 13, 2011  
Sermon for Lent VI  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

1 Peter 1:18-19 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version*. Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Have you ever read John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*? The story follows refugees from the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma in the 1930's. But what about the title, *The Grapes of Wrath*. What do grapes have to do with wrath? In the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* by Julia Wars Howe (1862), this same phrase surfaces again – you have probably sand it over the years: “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.”

Again, vintage wine and grapes...what have they to do with God's wrath?

The imagery comes from the Bible. In the Bible, wine, produces from grapes, often symbolizes blood. You can no doubt understand why; for one things their appearance is very similar. Dark red wine, looks very much like blood. Without smelling or tasting it, you might not be able to distinguish it. I remember a story told by my mother of some of Grandpa's new wine, bursting it's bottle because it was corked too soon. It had been stored in the second storey of their home. As it seeped through the ceiling, she said that it looked very much like blood when it dripped onto the kitchen floor.

As our usher passes the wine around, take a look at it, notice it similarity to blood. Feel free to taste it. Although it has not been consecrated, it is real wine and I leave it up to the parents as to whether they allow their children to take a cup.

If you have ever seen wine flowing from a wine press, it looks very much like blood, even foaming as blood will do when you bleed out an animal prior to butchering.

Wine takes us back to blood. Most of the time, wine that is used in Holy Communion is of the red variety, to further remind us of blood. God required the payment of blood for sin – the payment of death – sometimes the Bible portrays God in wrath, stamping out sinners as one would crush grapes in a winepress. Being just and hating sin, God has every right and duty to stamp out sin and that means stamping out sinners.

In the Old Testament reading, we heard the prophet Jeremiah announce a somewhat scary proclamation from God that He is about to tread on the nations to fill the cup with wine of His wrath, with their blood. The prophet Isaiah paints the same bloody picture,: (Isaiah 63:3-4, 6, ESV)

<sup>3</sup>*“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. <sup>4</sup> For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come ...*

<sup>6</sup> *I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”*

The price for sin is death, the shedding of blood. The problem is, if you pay for your own sin, then you're dead!

You are like a grape that had been pressed dry and flat. There is no hope for you. But if someone else pays your debt for you, then you live! You're free! Either way, the price of blood has to be paid to accomplish redemption.

This was the meaning of the slaughter of the Passover lambs – and all the other sacrificial animals of the Old Testament. Their lifeblood, not the people's were spilled. God's wrath against sin "passed over" the people, crushing the animals, though they were only types and symbols of the final, complete sacrifice of blood.

When people gathered around the Passover table, they drank four cups of warm, dark red wine during the meal, symbolizing the warm blood of a freshly sacrificed lamb. Of the four cups, the third "cup of blessing" or "the cup of redemption" commemorated God's promise to free the Israelites from slavery.

When Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples on Maundy Thursday evening, He probably took the third cup of wine, the cup of redemption, because the Bible tells us that it was the cup after supper (LK 2:22; 1 Cor. 11:25).

After He blessed it, probably with the traditional Passover blessing, He gave it to the disciples and said, "... **"Drink of it, all of you,"<sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>29</sup> 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."** Matthew 26:27-29 (ESV)

No longer did this cup of dark, warm wine merely symbolize the blood of the sacrificed animal. Now it actually was the blood of the perfect Sacrifice of

Redemption to end all sacrifices. It is Jesus' blood, the blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. IN giving the disciples the cup of redemption, Jesus was saying that God's wrath would crush Him as the payment for all who were enslaved in the hopelessness of sin.

But what a terrible price to pay! No wonder Jesus pleaded with His Father, *"Take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done"* (LK 22:42) The cup He had to drink of contained God's wrath against the rebellion of every sinner who had and who would ever live. It was all, all sin, was concentrated in that cup of suffering. Isaiah foretold and tells us today: *"It was the LORD's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and ... [make] His life a guilt offering."* (IS 53:10) To crush Jesus as grapes are crushed in a winepress.

These are the grapes of wrath! *"He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities".* (IS 53:5) On the cross, the immeasurable weight of all of the sin of the world, crushed the life out of Jesus. His lifeblood shed for you.

That is the horrible price of your redemption: the blood of Jesus, the perfect Passover Lamb. <sup>18</sup> *knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,* <sup>19</sup> *but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."* (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Having given them the cup of His blood, Jesus said one thing more: <sup>29</sup> *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."* (Matthew 26:29)

What does this mean? Jesus is saying that they would not drink of the fourth cup, the cup of praise. Rabbinic writings say that the cup of praise must be consumed before the Passover Meal can be considered finished.

Jesus is telling us that the Lord's Passover Meal is not finished. It continues today and it will continue until we drink of the cup of completion in the Father's kingdom of heaven forever.

This means that every time we gather at the Lord's Table for Holy Communion, Jesus is as present with us in the bread and wine as He was with the disciples that first Maundy Thursday.

The New Covenant meal continues today as real as it was when it was first instituted, and it will continue until Jesus returns. The meal is not finished...we are awaiting the full, bodily return of the Founder of the feast.

In the meantime, we receive His true body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. Do we understand the mystical union of our Lord's body and blood; in, with and under the bread and wine? No; but do we understand why penicillin works? A chemist somewhere might give me a formula as to why it works, but in truth, they don't know either. They have a formula that they trust, which explains it to them, but it really doesn't say why, they just believe it. It is accepted as true. It penicillin works because it does; it has cured millions of people who had no clue of the formula or maybe even why it works.

In the sacramental union of bread and wine; body and blood, there is no formula; no proof; other than because Jesus says so. He said this is my body, this is my blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins.

We don't know why or how it works, but we believe it because Jesus said so and He has fulfilled all of His promises thus far.

And so millions upon millions have taken, eaten and drank in faith; and have indeed received the forgiveness of sins, without needing a convoluted mathematical formula, only going on faith that has been wrought by the Holy Spirit. His body and blood are there because He said so; you are forgiven...because He said so.

Next week, as we celebrate Maundy Thursday, we will share in this precious gift of Christ's blood.; the sacrificial price He paid to redeem us from God's wrath. His body and blood are there because He said so; you are forgiven...because He said so. Through faith in Jesus; in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit,

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Adapted from the Lenten series: *Christ our Passover* by Rev. Dr. David Peter