Maundy Thursday 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
April 14, 2022 309-315-114-103

May Christ the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us and grant us His peace. Amen.

Maundy Thursday – The Crucial Hour Remembered
I. It is crucial that we always remember this hour.
II. We remember it with a special meal.
III. We remember it by receiving its blessings.

Dear Christian friends,

Today we remember that CRUCIAL HOUR when ***"our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night He was betrayed"*** instituted Holy Communion. We hear that FAMILIAR COMMAND of Holy Communion, ***"Do this in remembrance of Me."*** To NOT DO the ***"this"*** of Holy Communion is to defy and disobey the CLEAR COMMAND of our dear Savior.

In a sense Jesus and the apostles had gathered in that ***"upper room"*** in Jerusalem BECAUSE CENTURIES EARLIER God had said, ***"Do this"*** – celebrate the Passover meal – ***"in remembrance of Me."*** BOTH the Passover in the OT and Holy Communion in the NT are meals remembering CRUCIAL HOURS in God's plan of salvation.

So today – **Maundy Thursday** – we have THE CRUCIAL HOUR REMEMBERED. 1)It is crucial that we **always remember** this hour. We remember this crucial hour 2)with a special meal and 3)by receiving its **blessings**.

I. It is crucial that we always remember this hour.

It was CRUCIAL for the Israelites to celebrate the Passover meal and REMEMBER how God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt. Their deliverance was ALL GOD'S DOING – it was all because of God's GRACE – and was proof positive of God's FAITHFULNESS to His **Word** and **promises**. So God ordered His people in the OT reading, ***"This day shall be a memorial for you, and you are to celebrate it as a festival to the LORD. Throughout your generations you must celebrate it."***

HOW CRUCIAL it is for us to celebrate Holy Communion and REMEMBER how God has rescued us from sin, death, the devil and hell. JUST AS it was for the Israelites – our salvation is ALL GOD'S DOING – it's all because of God's GRACE – and is proof positive of God's FAITHFULNESS to His **Word** and **promises**.

In Holy Communion we ***"remember"*** that our salvation is ALL GOD'S DOING. Holy Communion is NOT FOR **good** people who have cleaned up their **acts** and straightened out their **lives**. Holy Communion is FOR GUILTY SINNERS who desperately need God's forgiveness. IF I don't see myself as a **guilty sinner** who DESERVES ONLY God's wrath and **rejection** – a **sinner who deserves** ONLY hell's eternal banishment and **punishment** – if I DON'T SEE that as true about myself then I won't see HOW CRUCIAL **this hour** is or HOW SPECIAL **this meal** really is.

An honest look at ourselves **in that mirror** of God's law makes painfully clear JUST HOW SINFUL we are. We can't even MAKE IT PAST the **very first** commandment – that GOD always comes first in our hearts and lives. If God really came first we would NEVER misuse His name or be less than diligent in our prayers – we would EAGERLY use every opportunity to **worship** God and **study** His Word. If God really came first in our lives we would NEVER disobey our **parents** – disrespect our **government** – never break the speed limit. Those commandments make clear GOD'S WILL for our lives yet **how often** isn't our attitude, "SAY WHAT You want, God, but I'll do whatever I want!"? **How often** don't we know EXACTLY WHAT God says and yet we still do the EXACT OPPOSITE?

Being honest about our **sin** and the hell we **deserve** HOW CRUCIAL it is for us to remember these hours of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Our salvation – our forgiveness – is ALL GOD'S DOING and ALL BY **God's grace**.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night He was betrayed…" ***"Our Lord Jesus Christ"*** is none other than the eternal, almighty Son of God born our flesh-and-blood brother. God's Son was born a true man to TAKE THE PLACE of all people under God's law. IN **our place** and TO **our credit** Jesus had been busy living THAT LIFE of **perfect** love, trust, obedience that we had owed God.

Now it was time for Jesus to ***"be obedient unto death, even death on a cross."*** The sinless Son of God took our place on the cross and there was punished for the sins of the whole world. The ***"beloved Son"*** of God is also ***"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"*** by shedding His blood and dying the death that FULLY PAYS for all our sins. We don't add anything to what Jesus **has all done** for us. Our forgiveness is ALL BECAUSE and ONLY because Jesus ***"gave His body into death"*** and ***"shed His blood for the forgiveness"*** of all our sins.

How crucial it is for us to SEE and REMEMBER this! To help us do just that Jesus – ***"on this night He was betrayed"*** – gave us this SPECIAL MEAL we call Holy Communion.

I. We remember it with a special meal.

As the Israelites OBEYED God's command and ate the Passover they ***"remembered"*** God rescuing them from slavery in Egypt. The bitter herbs recalled that bitter slavery. The unleavened bread recalled the HASTE with which they left Egypt. Those perfect lambs recalled the FIRST PASSOVER lambs whose blood on their doorframes had protected their forefathers from the ***"angel of death"*** bringing God's judgment of death on the Egyptians.

When Jesus and the apostles had finished eating that OT Passover meal Jesus instituted this **NT meal** of Holy Communion. Jesus used "LEFTOVERS" from the Passover meal – some **unleavened bread** and **grape wine** – to give us a meal that is SO MUCH BETTER than the Passover – a **meal** that is really A MIRACLE.

We're not told WHAT WORDS Jesus used when He ***"gave thanks"*** that night. He ***"broke the bread"*** into pieces to give each disciple. As He gave them that bread He told them in CLEAR, UNMISTAKABLE words, ***"Take, eat, this is My body, which is given for you."*** Jesus then took a ***"cup"*** of wine and again ***"gave thanks."*** As Jesus gave them that cup of wine He told them **again** in CLEAR, UNMISTAKABLE words, ***"Take drink, this is the My blood of the new testament, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."***

How crucial it is that we CLEARLY UNDERSTAND Holy Communion! Communion is literally a MIRACLE. The **bread** and **wine** don't just picture or **remind** us of how Jesus once gave His body into death and shed His blood to pay for our sins. That's not WHAT JESUS SAYS. ***"This IS My body – this IS My blood."*** With the bread Jesus really gives us the VERY SAME BODY He gave into death on the cross that first Good Friday. With the wine Jesus really gives us the VERY SAME BLOOD He shed on the cross that first Good Friday. We don't see or taste Jesus' body and blood. We can't explain HOW this can be except to say, ***"nothing is impossible with God."*** Jesus' words are CLEAR and we take Jesus AT HIS WORD. This bread we eat ***"is His body given for us."*** This wine we drink ***"is His blood of the new testament poured out for the forgiveness of sins."***

"Do this in remembrance of Me." Jesus wants us COMING REGULARLY – repeatedly – ***"often"*** - to His Supper. This special meal IS CRUCIAL to our ***"remembering"*** Jesus and what He all did ***"for the forgiveness"*** of all our sins.

III. We remember it by receiving its blessings.

And so we come to this SPECIAL MEAL. We take Jesus up on His INVITATION to ***"eat and drink"*** and with the bread and wine our Savior gives us His true body and blood. We remember this CRUCIAL HOUR by receiving the **blessings** Jesus won for us with His death on the cross.

"My body give for you. My blood of the new testament" – God's promise to ***"forgive (our) wickedness and remember (our) sins no more."*** Time and again – USING VARIOUS pictures and words – the gospel proclaims God's forgiveness of **all** our sins. ***"Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you. The blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He Himself (God) will redeem Israel from all their sins."***

Jesus wants us SO SURE of His forgiveness that He not only TELLS us that over and over in His Word – Jesus proves it to us IN SO SPECIAL A WAY in this **so special meal**. As we come to His table Jesus speaks to EACH ONE of us **personally** and **individually**. "David, HERE'S THE PROOF that when I died on the cross that **very first** Good Friday I DIED FOR YOU – I died to pay for **every one** of YOUR sins **in full**. ***'Take, eat – this is My body given FOR YOU, David. Take, drink – this is My blood shed FOR YOU, David, for the forgiveness of sins."***

Just don't stop there! As we come to His table Jesus speaks to EACH ONE of us **personally** and **individually**, "David, HERE'S THE PROOF of just how much I REALLY DO LOVE you – the **proof** that I always keep My promises – the **proof** that you really are a **redeemed, beloved child** of God – the **proof** that you really will live with Me forever in heaven when you die. ***'David, Take eat – drink – My body – My blood – given – shed FOR YOU, David, for the forgiveness of sins."***"

HOW CRUCIAL it is for us to see our CONTINUING NEED for this **special meal**. The **devil** never lets up in his efforts to COME BETWEEN us and Jesus – to DISTRACT us so we lose sight of Jesus and forget His many **comforting promises**. The **world** can BE SO APPEALING with its temptations and empty promises of **fun** and **good times**. Our **sinful natures** can be so stubborn and defiant. It can be a REAL BATTLE to ***"daily deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus."*** Our daily Christian lives can be PRETTY PATHETIC – our love for God LUKEWARM – our excuses **down-right ridiculous**. Am I REALLY a Christian? Is God FED UP with me? HOW can God love me after… - how can God forgive me after…? The devil wants us to FINALLY DESPAIR of God's **love** and **forgiveness** just as Judas did.

Oh the joy – the RELIEF – the peace and **comfort** of Jesus' INVITATION – and command! – ***"Eat, drink – My body, My blood – given/shed – FOR YOU. DO this in remembrance of Me."*** Amen.

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