

Luke 22.7-20
Holy Thursday
14 April 2022
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St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The thoughts for today's homily come from the last two verses of our Gospel reading, Luke 22:19-20: "And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new testament in My blood."

We pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in you sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, Amen.

"For you." Those two little words can totally change the meaning of something that is said. Consider the parent who says to their teenager, "I just bought a car." The meaning of that is totally changed, especially in the mind of the teenager, if the words "for you" are added. "I just bought a car 'for you.'" It takes on a totally new meaning.

While "for you" is a small phrase of just two words and six short letters, those words "for you" are quite important.

Well, in Luke's account of the Institution of the Lord's Supper we hear those words two different times. "This is my body, which is given for you," "This cup that is poured out for you is the new testament in my blood." Twice we hear Jesus say these words. This body for you. This cup is poured out for you.

How vital those words are because "before you do anything else with Christ, you take him as a gift" (Luther vol. 35). That's what Luther says. "Before you do anything else with Christ, you take him as a gift." Before you consider Christ's example or learn from Him, you first receive Him as a gift.

When I think of gifts, I think of Christmas. I think of the tree with all of those presents under it. And with all of those presents, the gifts need tags. This gift is for Kate. This gift if for Mike. This gift is for you. That's what these two little words convey. This is for you. This is a gift. And how wonderful it is to receive a gift.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, consider that in what Jesus says about the Lord's Supper. There is a gift here in this meal and the gift is Jesus Himself. That's why Jesus came to this world to be born of Mary. That's why He was baptized in the Jordan River. That's why He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. And that's why He offers this meal. This is all for you. All of it.

However, as we receive Jesus' gift on this day, we acknowledge that what we receive this day is tied to what happens on Good Friday. Jesus offers you this bread, which is His very body that was sacrificed on the cross for you. Jesus offers you this wine, His very blood that was poured out for your sins as He hung on the cross.

You see, just as this meal, the Lord's Supper, is for you, so too is Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus didn't just die on Good Friday, He died for you. And what that means is that it was because of you ... and me. It was for you and your sins and mine that Jesus endures the beating, the mocking, and the jeering. It is for you

that Jesus suffers the pain and anguish of the cross. This is for you. So that your rebellion could be traded for His righteousness. So that your sins, which are many, would be forgiven.

Especially during these days, it's proper for us to reflect on our sins for which Jesus went to the cross. For your impatience with your spouse. For your dishonoring of your parents. For your avoidance of dealing with what your children need most. For your gossip about that juicy situation. For your thoughts about what belongs to your neighbor. For your ... For you.

Jesus died to atone for these your sins so that your sins could be covered by His blood and so that you could be covered in the robe of His righteousness. That is why Jesus does what He does. It is all for you. Do you see how significant this is, how significant these two little words "for you" are?

And so, God forgive us for those times when we've thought of Jesus' death and resurrection as something far-off. And God help us never to think of this as something distant from us, because it's not. Jesus is for you.

The other day I was walking through a Christian bookstore. The ad on the radio was promoting all kinds of resources for Easter. At least three different times it struck me that the ad kept talking about the resurrection story. Now, the story of Jesus' Death and Resurrection is huge. It's the most significant thing that's happened in the history of the world. But if it's just a story, if it's just a fact in history, that's not enough. If it's not for you, then it doesn't help you out. This is what I mean when I say God help us to never think of this as something distant which happened a long time ago on the other side of the world.

It's got to be more than just a story as the Apostle Paul writes in Romans, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. The fact of the matter is that the Gospel, if it is truly to be Gospel, must be delivered to you. And it must do something to you. And it must be something for you.

You see, you've got to be Gospel-ed. And the Lord's Supper which Jesus instituted for us on this night, this is the very special way that Jesus moves us beyond just a story, to something that truly matters for you and does something to you – today.

Jesus, in giving Himself to you in this meal – His very body and blood – delivers the power of the Gospel to you here and now. This isn't just your remembering about something that happened 2000 years ago. This is Jesus Gospel-ing you. He is delivering to you the power of God as you receive what He sacrificed on the cross. He will actually give you that – His very body and blood – in, with, and under the bread and wine.

Jesus does this for you and for your salvation. He comes to you today with this amazing gift to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. To create a clean heart in you and me. And that is precisely what happens here today and as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup.

And we should spend a little time considering those words, "as often as you do this" because over the last several years, and especially the last couple, some people have been asking if we Christians really need to gather. And I'm not talking about what we're allowed to do. I'm talking about the fact that many of our neighbors see what happens here as less important than they did years ago. Most in our culture either think, or at least question, whether church is essential. What happens here today declares otherwise. Because today the God who took on our flesh, gives His flesh and blood for us Christians to

eat and to drink in order to give us exactly what we need: forgiveness, life and salvation. It's Jesus' gift for you.

And this gift is actually given for the life of the whole world. And that means that, going out from here, you and I are called to tell others about what Jesus offers here, because they've got to be Gospel-ed. They need to receive Jesus' special gift in this meal. They need to receive Jesus. And He is here in this place, in this meal.

So, beloved in the Lord, never forget that, never forget that He's here, Jesus is here ... for you. Amen.

Now the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.