

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Watertown, WI**

**“I Tell You the Truth . . . Until I Drink It New in the Kingdom of God”**

Rev. David K. Groth  
Maundy Thursday  
April 6, 2023

*“And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mk. 14:22-25).*

The painting we know as *The Last Supper* is arguably the most popular piece of Christian art in the world. Its image has been found on canvas, carpets, carvings, porcelain, pottery, and every other medium. The facial expressions are life-like and depict real emotions we know. It’s a large painting, measuring about 15 feet by 29 feet and it became an instant masterpiece.

It was completed in 1498, and almost immediately the surface of the painting started to flake. Leonardo da Vinci, always the inventor, tried using new materials for this work. Instead of using the customary wet plaster, da Vinci gave dry plaster a whirl. What worked artistically did not work in terms of durability. Ever since, flakes of paint have been falling to the floor, leading to one restoration after another, so much so that little of the original painting remains. *The Last Supper* isn’t lasting.

In our text, John takes us back to the upper room, where the Last Supper took place. They were all looking forward to this night. It was their Passover, a remembrance of Old Testament salvation history which was mated with a feast including roast lamb and wine. It would have started with a review of the history of God’s grace, particularly remembering how God used the blood of a lamb painted on doorframes to keep his people safe as the angel of death passed over Egypt. They would have recalled how God led the people of Israel out of the land of slavery with a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. Finally, they would have listened to the story of the Red Sea being parted, allowing God’s people to pass through to safety, only to have those waters come crashing down on the pursuing enemies.

As the disciples ate this meal and quietly listened, they felt a connection to the past. This is, after all, an important part of *their* history. This is why they were living in Israel now, and not Egypt. This is why they were free, not enslaved.

As they ate this meal and listened to their history, the disciples also felt a connection with God. This is how God made them His people. Of all the peoples on earth, He chose them mostly because they were small, weak, and enslaved. Yet God procured their liberty and led them out of the desert and through the waters adopting them as His people. Paul wrote, “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor. 1:27). For forty years in the desert, he taught and trained and disciplined them to be his people. The disciples of Jesus understood. This is why they worshipped the LORD God, and not one of the idols of Egypt because the LORD brought them out of Egypt with a strong arm.

Celebrating this meal, they felt a connection 1), to their past, and 2), a connection to God. And 3), they felt a connection to one another. This Passover history made them a people, a nation, a family. This history, in a sense, made those men in that upper room brothers.

Passover, then, is one of the most important festivals for the Jews. It speaks deeply to the Jewish soul. It was also a welcome rest for the disciples.

You know when you’re so busy and your days so full, that when you look back and ask yourself what you were doing this time a week ago, you can hardly believe it. I suspect the disciples are feeling that way too. Their days were so full, full of crazy, uncommon stuff, miraculous healings, fierce opposition, a parade of palms and loud acclamations, tables overturned in the temple courts, one very dry fig tree . . . so much stuff. It must have felt wonderful to sit down, slow down and enjoy a very satisfying meal.

Just when they were thinking this is good and it’d be nice to stay there for a few days, Jesus chimes in and says some very odd things about the meal they are celebrating. While they were eating, Jesus took the bread and said, “This is my body.” Then he took the cup of wine, also prescribed, offered it to them, and said, “This is my blood, shed for you

for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt. 26:28). Jesus was changing the very nature of the supper. They could not have understood all the implications, but they certainly remembered the words, and with them, they knew Jesus had changed the meal, and had made it a vital, important meal for them, *and for us!*

Just like the Passover meal, *this* meal connects us to our past, to God, and to one another, *and* to the future. Through the Lord’s Supper, Jesus invites us to look back. He’s connecting us to our past. We are about to celebrate an essential supper, vital for our faith. But before we come to this table tonight, Jesus wants us to look inward as we examine ourselves. If we do that with any kind of integrity and with the bright light of God’s Law, we’ll find we are guilty of sinning against God and one another, in what we’ve done and failed to do, and what we deserve is only his punishment.

But we also look back into the past in remembrance of Him, recalling that our sin is why He suffered under Pontius Pilate. It’s why He was flogged and mocked and spat upon. Our sin, yours and mine, is why He was crucified. As often as we eat this bread and drink this wine, we proclaim His death until He comes. This meal connects us with that past.

This meal connects us also with God. Jesus, as testified by His own words and promise, is miraculously present in this meal tonight. He is here, in, with, and under these earthly elements. Paul writes, “The bread that we break, is it not a participation on the body of Christ? The cup of thanksgiving . . . is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?” As we receive His body and His blood, He connects Himself to us and gives us forgiveness of sins. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

At this meal, we are connected to the past, and to God. We are also connected to one another. At this table we are brothers and sisters in Christ! More than that. Paul writes, in this meal “we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Co 10:17).

In this supper Jesus also invites us to look forward, to the future. So once again, He grabs our attention with “I tell you the truth.” “I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” That word “until” is very important here. It is a word of promise. It is a word of hope. It’s a word that directs our attention to the future, to that day when we celebrate the feast anew in the kingdom of God.

In other words, this meal, as vital as it is, is not our Lord’s long-term goal for us. His long-term goal for us is to feast with Him and all His saints at the banquet in heaven. He’s giving us His body and blood *so that* we can feast with Him at a *lasting* supper, not one the flakes off the wall, not one where someone at the table has plans of betrayal, not one that ends too soon, a lasting supper. I don’t know what that heavenly banquet will really look like, feel like, or taste like. But it will be good, and it will not be like anything we’ve ever experienced before.

- No longer will we have to look inward and examine ourselves for sin because we’ll be confirmed in holiness, wearing white robes of righteousness washed by the blood of Jesus.
- No longer will we have to look around and be saddened by relationships where you feel you’re walking on eggshells, or are stressed by relationships that are already fractured and broken, because in heaven there will be perfect unity.
- No longer will Jesus be with us only sacramentally; he will be with us face-to-face.
- No longer will we have to imagine what the angels and archangels look like – they’ll be there too.
- No longer will we need to look ahead for something better, because this meal will not be surpassed. It will be filled with overwhelming joy, a joy that lasts and endures forever.

Every meal on earth ultimately ends. They don’t last. Either you run out of food or appetite or things worth talking about. But that meal in heaven will be a lasting supper, a banquet that never ends. That’s God’s promise and God’s gift.

One last thing. Have you ever prepared a nice meal for a group of people, and just when you put the last dish out on the island, someone has already picked up a plate and is helping themselves, not knowing that usually, we like to pray before we eat. Not just others, sometimes I catch myself forgetting to pray, especially when I’m eating alone, nothing fancy, just a bowl of cereal, or when eating out at a crowded restaurant. When we forget to pray before eating, Luther said, we are like pigs to the trough.

But Jesus, He’s patient and thoughtful. He’s waiting for us. He will not start without us. How very kind! “I tell you the truth: I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” I like to think that means with you, with me, and with all the saints. Thanks be to God. Amen.