

“Only Bread and Wine”

Matthew 26:26-28

April 21, 2011

Maundy Thursday

When I was a child (about 7 - 8 years old) and attending church with my parents, I watched them go to the Lord's Supper. (At that time, children did not go up front with the adults for a blessing.) I wondered what was happening up there. The pastor talked about bread and wine. I could see my parents and others eating and drinking. And I thought, "This is wonderful. We have been sitting here for a long church service. Now, near the end of the service, we are taking a break and the pastor is serving lunch - food and drink. That's really nice!" And then I thought that anyone who missed breakfast could go up, eat, and be filled. And homeless people who hadn't had food for a long time could go up, eat, and be satisfied. What a wonderful idea!

This is a true story and shows how a little boy thinks. It may seem kind of silly and immature way to understand this special meal. However, that story reflects what many people believe about this meal: that it is merely bread and wine to eat and drink. Few people would think this is enough bread and wine to eat and drink and be satisfied like I did when I was a child. Nevertheless, people think this is a religious tradition that we do to remember Jesus' suffering and death. Sometimes, we may not even think about what it is for. Every Sunday, we get up, process up to the altar, eat & drink, and go back to sit down, thinking nothing about the meaning. And if we miss the Lord's Supper for a month or two, it's no big deal.

Satan wants you to think that way. He wants you to think this is only bread and wine. He wants you to believe that you eat and drink it only to follow some religious tradition. He wants you to think it is no big deal. That is Satan's lie. Satan tells you that lie in order to rob you of a very precious gift from God.

Jesus established this special meal on this night many years ago because we had a very special need. We had sinned against our God and broken His laws. Our sins offend Him and earn

His anger and punishment. If we are truly aware of our sin, then that sin also bothers us and gives us a great feeling of guilt. We need God's forgiveness and we need peace.

Jesus earned that forgiveness when He died on the cross. He offered up His body on the cross and shed His blood to placate God's anger and obtain forgiveness for all sins. But how would that forgiveness be given to us? This is like having money in the bank. Someone earns money and puts it in the bank. The money is there, but how do you get it? That person writes a check, signs it, and you can get the money from the bank. One person both earns the money and distributes the money

Jesus did the same thing. Jesus earned the forgiveness for our sins and He established a way to convey that forgiveness to us -- the Lord's Supper. He offered His body and blood on the cross to win forgiveness. Here, He writes the check to distributed that forgiveness. We receive the same body and blood to eat and drink with the bread and the wine. In our text, Jesus says, "Take and eat; this bread is my body....every one of you drink this. This wine is my blood which begins the new covenant." How is it possible for Jesus' body and blood to be present with the bread and wine? We can't see it. We can't taste it. And we can't prove it. This is a MYSTERY which we accept by faith in Jesus' promise. So, we eat and drink, believing that this is truly Jesus' body and truly Jesus' blood.

And what do we eat it for? We are not feeding our bodies. But God is feeding our guilty souls. Jesus says, "This is shed for many people for the forgiveness of sins." In our eating and drinking, we are actually receiving the forgiveness for all our sins. That means we have peace with God and life forever through this eating and drinking. Again, the question arises: How is this possible? How can eating and drinking give us these wonderful things?" Our eating and drinking do not accomplish that. Jesus' promise to give us forgiveness in our eating and drinking accomplishes it. Jesus can do anything He wants. And, if He wants to give us forgiveness, peace, and salvation through eating and drinking, then we get it. He invites you to His banquet to in order to give you that.

If the president invited you to a banquet at the White House, you would get ready - clean yourself up, get some new clothes, and so on. How do you get ready for Jesus' banquet? In the past, we had some traditions to prepare for the Lord's Supper. Some people fasted before receiving the Lord's Supper. Some people felt they had to have the proper "church" clothes. Those traditions are good and fine. But the Bible tells us how to prepare correctly. First, we are to examine ourselves -- recognize our sins and mistakes and admit them -- even sins that we cannot remember. Second, we are to repent -- to be sorry for our sins and want to change with God's help. Third, we are to believe Jesus words: "This is my body given *for you*. This is my blood shed *for you* for the forgiveness of sins." If you do those three things, then you are ready for the Lord's Supper

I encourage you to receive this wonderful gift often. We are fortunate here because our church offers the Lord's Supper every Sunday and every special service. Some people may object and say, "I don't really need the Lord's Supper every Sunday." Some people say, "I don't feel that I need forgiveness." Martin Luther said, "If you feel that you don't need the Lord's Supper, then *touch your body*. Are you still a human being? Are you still alive? If you are a human being and if you are still alive on this earth, then you are a sinner and in need of forgiveness." Here, Jesus comes to you personally. Here, you get forgiveness for all of your sins. Here, you receive peace and relief. Here, you may receive Jesus' banquet often. How God has blessed you!

I have grown up a lot since I first began thinking about the Lord's Supper. I understand more about this meal. I reject Satan's lie that this is only bread and wine and I hope you reject that lie, too. This is not mere bread and wine to eat and drink and satisfy our physical hunger. This is a precious gift from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He comes to us. He gives us Himself - His body and blood. And what He earned on the cross - forgiveness - He gives to us. The banquet is tonight. Come, eat, drink! Receive His forgiveness, His life, His peace. Enjoy fellowship with Him and fellowship with each other. Everything is ready! Come! Amen.