

9 April 2009  
Holy Maundy Thursday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“A Meal for the Wounded”

Text: Mark 14:12-26; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; Exodus 24:3-11

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

When Jesus “Woke That Thursday Morning” (LSB #445), it was the last time He would wake up this side of the grave. That day would bring His usual teaching in the Temple, His prayers in the garden, and then His betrayal and arrest, His all-night trials, and then the cross. Yes, as we sang, *He knew how the day would end*. He knew, and so He gathers with His disciples one last time, alone, in the Upper Room. Because your last will and testament is what you put in order before you die. But having no earthly possessions to leave them - for as we are told: **“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”** (Matt 8:20) - He gives them, and us, what is of infinitely greater value than anything of this world: His body and blood. The same body and blood sacrificed to satisfy the hunger for revenge of the Jewish leaders, would first and forever be given to satisfy those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and forgiveness. And not as simply an exercise in remembering for us, but as a gift to be received by us. For as Jesus Himself said: **“My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.”** (John 6:55) And, **“Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”** (John 6:58b)

That is why we are gathered here this night: to remember the New Testament of our Lord’s Supper, and to once again receive this gift. That our sins be forgiven, our faith strengthened, and the life we live be eternal. And so how appropriate that we gather this night here - not able to meet in our regular church space - but in a house, in an upper room, around a dining room table made altar, whereon a feast unlike any other feast is set for us. As on that night when Jesus met with His disciples, the world outside these doors is making all kinds of plans - some for evil, some for good, some rather ordinary. But here, and on altars all over the world, is the portal to another world; the in-breaking of Heaven into this world of sin, as our Saviour God comes to us as both Host and Meal. Here we are not the doers, we are simply privileged to be here with our Lord. And we have no “right” to be here; we are in no position to demand anything from our Lord - we are here in repentance for our sins - for who we are and what we have done; and here in faith in His Word of promise. That when He says **This is My Body**, we believe that it is. That when He says **This is My Blood**, we believe that it is. We ask not how, but believe His Word. That when He says **For the forgiveness of your sins**, we believe that they are. And

that by eating His body and drinking His blood and receiving His forgiveness, we begin to live that life given to us. The Christian life. His life of forgiveness and love which begins here, and will never end.

How such a small and simple meal could do such exalted things seems silly to the human mind - unless this is no small and simple meal. Indeed, what is happening here is as St. Paul wrote: ***this cup is a participation in the blood of Christ; this bread is a participation in the body of Christ.*** In this meal we are united to Christ by His real body and blood, that we live in Him and He in us. And thus united to Christ, we are united to each other in Him. Members of one body; brothers and sisters in Him. And so here we are given a glimpse of the unity of heaven, as folks ***from every nation, tribe, people, and language*** (Rev 7:9) gather around the Lamb of God. To be sure, here it is an imperfect unity; but still, we receive a glimpse of what will be. Of the perfect unity of heaven, where neither age, race, status, privilege, prejudice, or pride divide us - but Christ is all in all.

And so we come to this meal in repentance. There is no room for pride here, or for measuring ourselves against others. If you want to measure yourself, use the Holy Law of God and see how you measure up. Like the people of Israel we heard about in Exodus earlier, we too have pledged that ***“all that the Lord has spoken we will do, and will we be obedient.”*** But we know that we have not. We have not loved the Lord with all our heart. We have not loved our neighbor as ourself. And our love for ourselves and our lack of love for God and for others has manifested itself in so many ways. And so we are here in repentance. Not defending ourselves and our actions; not denying our sins or placing ourselves above others - but knowing (like St. Paul) that we are the worst of sinners (1 Tim 1:15), and praying: ***“God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”*** (Luke 18:13)

But we come to this meal not only in repentance, but also in faith. Faith in His Word and His promise. That just as He mercifully offered up His body and shed His blood on the altar of the cross, so too He mercifully gives His body to eat and His blood to drink on this altar of wood. And so seals His covenant with us. His covenant of forgiveness. That He is our God, and we are His people. And so this is no mere physical eating, to nourish our bodies; but a sacramental eating, a spiritual eating, a supernatural eating, to nourish our souls. That joined to Christ and He to us, we feed on this bread and live forever. An eternal life that lies not just in the future, but which begins even now. And so we live like it. Not clinging to the things of this world, not following the wisdom of this world, not walking in the ways of this world, but clinging to Christ alone. That as He laid down His life for us, so may we lay down our lives for others.

And in so laying down our lives, you know what? **We will be wounded.** That is what we have been considering all this Lenten season - that we have wounded

others by our sin, that we wound ourselves with our sin, that Christ was wounded by our sins, and that we are often wounded by the sins of others. For sin is never harmless. We may think it is, and we may not always see the harm, but it is harmful - and even worse, it is deadly. Cross deadly. And as long as we live in this world of sin, we will be wounded; we will be less than our good and gracious God created us to be.

And so when Jesus "Woke That Thursday Morning," He not only knew how the day would end, He knew what He was going to give His disciples: **a Meal for the Wounded**. A meal that flowed from His wounds, from His life, from His love, that by His wounds we be healed (1 Peter 2:24). That by His wounds, we have life. That by His wounds, we love one another as He has love us. That by His wounds, we be all that He has created us to be.

So come now, my fellow wounded. Come in repentance, come in faith. Take eat, take drink. This is the blood of the New Testament, shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.