

Luke 22:7-20 ⁷ Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. ⁸ And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." ⁹ So they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?" ¹⁰ And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. ¹¹ "Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" ' ¹² "Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." ¹³ So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁴ When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. ¹⁵ Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ "for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ "for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁰ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

Hebrews 10:18 ¹⁸ Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night in which He was betrayed took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples saying, "Take and eat, this is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me." In the same manner also, He took the cup after He had supped and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying, "Drink of it all of you, this cup is New Testament in my blood which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." The peace of the Lord be with you always.

These familiar words are spoken prior to each time that we celebrate the Lord's Supper. They are spoken in order that we might remember what we receive in this meal. And what is it that we receive? His Body, His Blood, His forgiveness. Jesus promised the disciples sitting with Him at that first Lord's Supper that they received these wonderful gifts in the meal that He served them. And tonight Jesus promises to us that gather around His table tonight that we receive the same gifts as He serves them to us. We have no doubt what we receive at this meal as Christians because we know that when Jesus speaks, truth flows out of His mouth. We know we can take His words and place our trust in them. In this meal, which we mediate upon and receive again this night, we receive the New Testament in Jesus blood for our forgiveness. And that is our peace. That

is why I, as your pastor, always hold the body and the body of Jesus in my hands as I speak the words, “The peace of the Lord be with you always.” For it is in that body and blood of Jesus we have peace with our God.

All of our lessons teach this truth. Jeremiah prophesied it. In the new covenant, God would forgive all our iniquity and remember our sins no more. Jesus enacted it. This bread and this wine is my body and my blood. Therefore your iniquity is forgiven and I remember your sins no more. The author of the book of Hebrews explained it. The blood of beasts could not forgive sin, but the blood of Jesus did without question.

There is no doubt what the texts for this special day say. They teach quite simply that in the blood of Jesus is iniquity forgiven and sin remembered no more. They promise to us that the blood of Jesus, and it received in this meal, delivers to us the forgiveness of sins.

And as the author of the Hebrews says so powerfully, where there is forgiveness of sin, there is no more any offering for sin. Put into more simple language, our text from Hebrews teaches that when we receive Jesus forgiveness, all burden is removed from us. There is nothing left for us to do to have peace with God. We have peace because we have the blood to Jesus. We are left to live the Christian life in thankful response to His grace, rather than burdensome obligation to the law.

So also tonight, we rejoice that we are left to receive the Lord’s Supper in thankful response to God’s grace, rather than burdensome obligation to His law. For if you come the first Sunday of the month because it is the Sunday when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper and you had better be here, you have missed the point all together. If you come because you know that good Christians receive the sacrament at least once a month, listen again to the words of our text. If you think that missing one Sunday of communion is a failure to be a good Lutheran, ponder anew what this meal is all about.

For each of these thoughts show that we are trying to offer something to God, to please him, when we come to this meal. And this is not how we are to come. As Luther would say, He is worthy to receive this meal who believes in the words “given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” This means that we are only worthy for this meal when we put aside the ideas that we are pleasing God by coming to His supper, and rather hold fast to the idea that He is pleasing us when we come. We come to the supper not because we are faithful, but rather because we have been so faithless and need the forgiveness and peace offered in this meal. We come

to this meal only to receive from God and never to offer something to Him. For where there is forgiveness, there is no more any offering for sin.

I don't know about you, but I have never met a child yet that is really excited about doing chores. Even if it is something that they would otherwise not mind doing, the simple fact that it is demanded of them makes the task seem awful. Suggest to a child that perhaps there should be more chores to be done more often, and you will receive a loud scream of disapproval. If anything, children seek to get out of doing chores. Likewise, if we make the Lord's Supper into something we must do, rather than something we are blessed to receive, we too will seek to celebrate it as rarely as we can.

However, children on Christmas morning are all together a different story. They can't wait for that day to receive their gifts. If you were to suggest to them that perhaps Christmas should be celebrated twice a year rather than once, you would receive a loud cheer of approval from them. So also when we receive The Lord's Supper as pure gift, pure grace, it is only natural that we should desire it more and more often. If we make the Supper into an obligation, we will view it as children view chores. But if we receive it as gift, we will view it as children view Christmas morning.

God has not given us his gifts in order that we might feel obligated towards them. He gives us his gifts that we might be freed by them. He gives to us tonight His body, His Blood, His forgiveness. As we come toward the altar, we leave our pride and attempts to please God by our attendance at this meal behind. We come to the altar admittedly empty knowing that we will be filled. And filled we are. For in this meal, He gives out His forgiveness in abundance. As He places into your mouth this night His body and His blood, you will be satisfied beyond belief.

And having at this meal tasted and seen that our Lord is so good, the Lord's Supper will become a thing which we desire more and more. We will long to come the first Sunday of the month because we wish to receive God's gifts. We will come at least once a month because we want to and not because we have to. And we will know that if we miss one month, it is not that we have failed to please God, but rather that we have missed a great blessing in our life.

For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is no need for offering for sin anymore. And tonight there is forgiveness of sin for you at this altar. At this is altar for you is His body, His blood, His forgiveness. All you who have sinned, all you who are tired, all you who need peace, come to this altar and receive Jesus. Amen.