

Luke 22:7-20

On this night almost 2,000 years ago, our Lord Jesus Christ was filled with sorrow. He knew his dear friend and disciple Judas would betray him and hand him over to be crucified. He knew what lay before him. He told his other disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matthew 26:38). So, you and I keep watch this night and we see, despite all the *sorrow* in his own soul, Jesus never stopped *comforting* his disciples. Consider the amount of comfort he gave them this night—words all recorded for us in the Scriptures. He told them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me” (John 14:1,2). “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives” (John 14:27). He later said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Jesus even prayed to the Father so that the disciples could hear: “Holy Father protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one” (Jn 17:11). Everything Jesus said and did on this night was not for his own benefit—it was for ours. He acted with you and me in view. With solemn decisiveness and heartfelt longing, he marched forward knowing all that would happen to him. The same is true as he institutes his Holy Supper. He gives to his believers on earth a special gift, a comforting gift. He gives us a meal and says, **“Taste and See that the Lord is Good!”** Tonight we will consider three questions, crucial to our tasting and seeing:

1. How do we prepare for this Meal?
2. What do we eat in this Meal?
3. What do we receive through this Meal?

**1. How we prepare for this Meal...**

Whenever you have an important meal for family or a gathering of friends, you want to be prepared for them. You want to welcome them into your home and have a good time. You might do some cleaning or rearrange some seating, so that everyone has a place to sit, relax, and eat. The Lord Jesus was concerned about preparations too. This was his last night, his Last Supper with his disciples. He sent two disciples into the city of Jerusalem to prepare the place for them all to eat the Passover. Jesus said, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.”

They were wondering, How do we prepare for this meal? And Jesus told his disciples, “Get the house in order!” With miraculous precision he instructed them on the ‘who’ and the ‘where’ of this Meal. We can’t help but remember how Jesus showed the same miraculous knowledge on Palm Sunday, when he sent two disciples to find the donkey. Jesus showed his divine nature; he showed his power as true God. He accurately described those whom the disciples who run into, and how the course of events would go. “They left and found everything, just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.”

Jesus had longed to eat this Passover meal with his disciples. He had wanted to eat this meal because at the end, he would institute a new meal. St. Luke writes, “After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” Jesus distributed the final cup of the Passover meal, but instead of singing Psalms at the end, He started something new, taking bread and wine again and consecrating them. This was not the normal practice – and the disciples would have recognized this new thing. They knew Jesus was setting up a New Meal!

You and I must wrestle with the question: How do we prepare for this new Meal? How do we prepare for Holy Communion? Keep in mind what Jesus wants as we approach. He says to us too, “Get your house in order!” He’s not talking about making sure the rugs are vacuumed and the windows washed. Jesus wants spiritual preparation. He wants us to examine our lives and search our hearts. Are there sins which we are holding onto? Do certain attitudes or actions clutter our souls and need to be cleaned out? Get your house in order, O disciple of Christ! Jesus wants you to **Taste and see that the LORD is good...** but you can’t do that if you are not properly prepared to join the Meal. You can’t taste if you come in an unworthy manner.

The apostle Paul said the same thing in 1 Corinthians. Get your house in order, so that you do not eat and drink judgment on yourself. Make no mistake, sin is a barrier. It’s a dirty piece of garbage staining our souls. If we want to hold onto our sin, we won’t be holding onto Christ. Confess your sins and recognize your need. Getting our house in order means we recognize who’s setting the table for this Meal we call Holy Communion. This is the LORD God Almighty. He knows all and has all power. He comes to meet us and we do not want to be guilty of sinning against him!

### **2. What we eat in this Meal...**

Once we have examined ourselves and cleaned house, so to speak, we will want to grasp just what it is we eat in this meal. So I ask you, “What do we eat in this Meal?” The Words of Christ give us the answer: He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way after supper he took the cup saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” Jesus took the bread and gave thanks—and he did the same with the wine. (All of this happened after the Passover supper.)

Jesus’ first blessing and his powerful words have guaranteed something to you and me: This bread is Jesus’ body. This wine is Jesus’ blood. What do we eat in this Meal? We partake of Jesus’ body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine. It is given for us to eat and to drink in this Sacrament. **Taste and see that the LORD is Good!**

My words as a pastor are not “hocus pocus” when we celebrate the Holy Communion. Despite the fact that Pastor Rosenow has 30 years experience on me, his words of consecration are no more powerful than mine! Jesus’ words alone have the power to make miracles happen—and that’s exactly what we have in this Meal. Christ prepares a miracle for us. **Taste and see that the Lord is good!** In a mysterious, sacramental way the body and blood of Christ are truly present when we partake of the Sacrament of the Altar. You and I, and everyone who comes to the Table, will receive Jesus’ body and blood. The bread doesn’t change into Jesus’ body—as if it weren’t bread any more. The wine doesn’t change into Jesus’ blood—as if it weren’t wine. Four elements unite, two earthly (bread and wine) and two heavenly (Jesus’ body & blood) in a supernatural way. The bread also doesn’t represent Jesus’ body. The wine doesn’t represent Jesus’ blood. Christ our Lord said, “This bread is my body... This wine is my blood.” And so we believe it, even if we don’t understand it!

Remember this is a mystery. We can’t look under a microscope and find little bits of Divine DNA. You and I aren’t chewing on pieces of Christ’s flesh. We’re not cannibals when we eat this Meal. Yet there is a Real Presence. It’s beyond our feeble human understanding. We **Taste and see that the Lord is Good!**

### **3. What we receive through this Meal...**

In the body and blood of Christ you and I receive an amazing benefit, far outweighing anything a simple earthly Meal could give. That leads to my third question: What do we receive

through this Meal? Jesus said, “This is my body given for you...my blood poured out for you.” In fact, this is the blood of the *new* covenant. Remember Jesus broke with the traditional Passover meal. That old covenant given to Moses had strict rules—thou shalt not violate those rules! Yet, Jesus said, “I want to give you the New Covenant.” It’s really not a covenant new in time. It’s new in contrast to what the disciples were so used to.

The LORD had promised this new covenant through his prophet Jeremiah. He said, “The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them...This is the covenant I will make with them...I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:31,33a,34b). This new covenant of Jesus is a one-sided covenant. God will be doing all the work. God will forgive sins and keep the covenant. You and I partake of that covenant forgiveness through Jesus. The covenant was sealed by his own body and blood, given for us on Calvary. The Lord’s Supper is forgiveness we can touch and taste. **Taste and see that the Lord is Good!**

It may happen that a person comes into church feeling the weight and burden of their sins. The shame of failing as a husband, wife, parent, child, employee, employer, friend, or confidant may be wearing someone out. This person, Joe or Jane Christian, may hear the pastor say, “As a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” But he or she thinks, “Pastor wouldn’t say that if he knew me and my past. If he really knew me, he wouldn’t say ‘forgiven’.” So doubt remains for this person. But the Sacrament of Holy Communion is pure gospel. It takes away doubts and fears because Jesus himself sets the table. He says, “This is for you. Take, eat and drink!” He comes to us as individuals and in a personal way we receive the Lord’s Supper. We have the visible assurance of God’s love.

Let us continue to taste and see that the goodness of the Lord. Christ Jesus gives us his own body and blood—and we continually need it. Those first disciples certainly did—hours later all fell away on account of Jesus. The Savior was stripped of all worldly support, just as we will strip our altar later tonight. The disciples had deserted him. But he had not deserted them. Christ gave them a meal they could run back to and take comfort in. The Meal is for us too. Let us prepare, recognize his Real Presence, and trust his forgiveness. **Taste and see that he is good! Amen.**

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