

Sermon for Maundy Thursday

Date: April 14, 2022

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin,
MN

Old Testament: Exodus 24:3–11

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:16–17

Gospel Reading: Mark 14:12–26

Sermon Text: Mark 14:12–26

Sermon Title: Return to the Table

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 116:12–19

Hymns:

LSB 628 – Your Table I Approach

Break Your Hearts (*Tune: LSB 512*)

LSB 625 – Lord Jesus Christ, Life-Giving Bread

LSB 617 – O Lord, We Praise Thee

LSB 786 – Lord of All Good

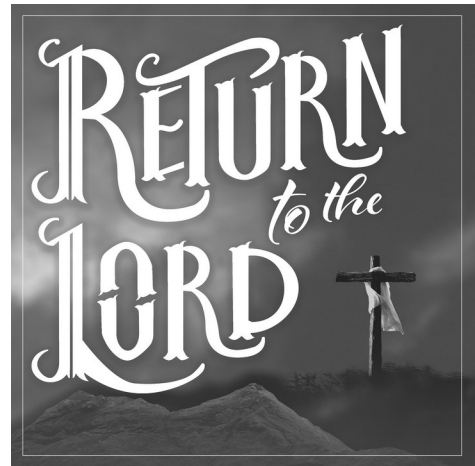
LSB 637 – Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord

LSB 622 – Lord Jesus Christ, You Have Prepared

LSB 446 – Jesus, Greatest at the Table

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



Return to the Table



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Text: Mark 14:12–26

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, [Jesus'] disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

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. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

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Grace to you and peace in Jesus' name. Amen.

You arrive home one afternoon after a long day at work. As you pull up to your house you stop at the end of the driveway and step out of your car to check the mailbox. As you sort through the mail you see the usual stuff: a couple of bills, a few credit card offers, a flyer for a sale at the furniture store. You notice a lawn-care service has put a card in the mailbox.

That's when you spot it. Something different. Something special. An over-sized envelope with a wax seal on the flap. Heavy paper with the address written in beautiful flowing calligraphy. It is stunning, beautiful and luxurious. There is no return address but you can tell this is a special invitation.

Without waiting to get in the house you tear the seal and open the envelope. Inside is an engraved invitation to join the Queen of England for a grand banquet. Your travel arrangements have already been made. All expenses are paid, and you will travel first class. Before you can consider what you have in the closet for such an event you note that proper attire, shoes and accouterments will be provided. You need only to appear.

When you call your boss to see if you can have a few days off you're stunned to discover your employer has already been notified, and arrangements have been made to cover your responsibilities while you are away. Every detail has been attended. A few days later, you're on a plane winging your way across the Atlantic.

When you arrive you are led to a prestigious Bentley Continental class limousine and whisked to a luxurious suite, where you have a some time to prepare for this amazing honor. You're a little unsure, but a quick check of the invitation confirms that yes, that is indeed your name and address, so it must actually be for you.

You get ready, and dress in the apparel laid out in your room. At the designated time a butler leads you to the reception room, and sits you at the table. As you enter the room you are surprised to find that you are not the only guest. Many people have been invited, from all walks of life, and everyone gathers to take their seats.

Small conversations meander as people become acquainted with one another and common interests are discovered. There is great eager anticipation throughout in the banquet hall. Everyone present admires the Queen and is joyful to soon be in her presence. The assembled group is full of kind loving people. All are made to feel they are part of the group.

As the night goes on minor disagreements pop up here and there. One person is angry that his neighbor took so much of the gravy for his potatoes. Another pair

begin to argue about whether the crystal in use is the best choice for such an event. Someone accidentally steps on another person's toes, and a short yelling match ensues. One guy in the back has had a little too much to drink and it crossed his mind to try belch the entire alphabet, much to the embarrassment of his table-mates. A woman turns to her neighbor to point out someone who is using the wrong fork for the salad.

As you look around at the gathering you may begin to wonder if you belong here. The meal is so grand, the environment is so luxurious. You doubt if this could possibly be meant for you. What could you have done to deserve such a gift? How could you ever repay such generosity? This is a once in a life time event. (Regardless of the company present.)

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Now that you've conjured this whole scene in your mind you might be asking: How does this fit into the Bible readings for today? Let me show you.

The invitation is not from the Queen of England. It is from Someone far more important. The invitation you received is actually from the "Jesus the Holy Christ of God, the only-begotten Son of God," the One "by whom all things were made."¹

The venue is not a palace in Great Britain it is the sanctuary of this very church right here. The table is not beautiful old teak wood, but this humble altar. The group of people who have been invited is, well,... look around you. Here gathered are fellow members of this congregation with visitors from a number of places. Oh ya, and the angels and arch-angels and all the company of heaven. The food is not prepared by someone who has repeatedly won a James Beard award, and is not, by the worlds standards, much worth mentioning, but it is the very bread from heaven and wine from the throne room of God.

We gather together today because of an invitation Jesus has sent to you. It reads: Return to the Table. Return to the fellowship that is the Body of Christ. Return to the Holy Communion we share with one another and all believers. This is not a once-in-a-life-time event. Jesus extends this invitation again and again, week after week, as He calls you to His Table to feed you, strengthen you and nourish your soul.

It is the most joyous feast you can experience this side of heaven's gates, but it doesn't take long to recognize it is also marred and tarnished by sin. We are among those selected and elected, we are the chosen of God, who are stained by a sinful nature that infects everything we are. We sit at the Table with people who suffer the

1 Nicene Creed

same malady. Judas-betrayers and Peter-deniers all of us. Which may prompt you to wonder if you should really be here.

At supper spent with Jesus that fateful Thursday night, this night, on the night when He was betrayed, Jesus revealed just that. One of His disciples would betray Him. That news sent a shock wave through the whole group. “Is it I?” “Do you mean me?” Each wondered in turn. “Am I that messed up?” “Would I would do something like that?”

You may wonder. You may doubt. You may ask, “Would I would do something like that?” Here is the truth. Jesus has called you here. He offers not just “a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine.”² It is not any of that. It is much, much more than that. He offers you His own Body and His own Blood. He offers you forgiveness, life and salvation in this precious, sacred, Holy Meal.

This Meal makes you, not what you want to be; not what you think you should; but what God declares you to be. This Meal binds you to your brothers and sisters in Christ and even more to your Lord and your Savior. This Meal removes your sins, strengthens your faith, and nourishes your body and soul to serve God and to serve your neighbor.

If that is what you seek here, you belong here, because Jesus has won your seat at the Table. Your Holy Baptism is your personal invitation, and Jesus’ death and resurrection is the seal that authenticates it as genuine. You were at that moment declared a child of the King. No one can give a true reason you do not belong here. For those in whom true repentance is felt, know this: That repentance is the Holy Spirit who dwells in you and is calling you to return to the Table. Your repentance is the guarantee³ you are welcome by Jesus, and because of Jesus. He has promised it, and His promise is trustworthy, reliable and true.

For those who regret their sins, rejoice in all Jesus gives us in this Holy Meal which we, in moments, will share with the faithful Church around the world. Give thanks for His grace, and His invitation to us to His Table. Do modern-day-Judas-betrayers eat with us? Do modern-day-Peter-deniers eat with us? They do. ...and some will follow Judas and his way.⁴ Others will walk the narrow road⁵ to repentance Peter walked.⁶

As amazing as this Meal is, never forget this is only an appetizer. This is the foretaste of the Feast to come. God has so much more in store for you. This bit of

2 Isaiah 25:6

3 2 Corinthians 7:10

4 Acts 1:25 – ... Judas abandoned his position to go to the place he belongs.

5 Matthew 7:13-14

6 John 21:15-19

bread and this sip of wine is just a sampler for the Feast beyond description we will one day share when all the saints of God come together for the Wedding Feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end.

We live in a time when we receive the benefits and the gifts God has for us today, right now, but but we also know, what we experience now, cannot hold a candle to what will be given to us on that Last Day, which for the repentant and faithful will be the First Day, in heaven. Today's gifts sustain you and build up your faith in the Feast to come.

May you repent and then rejoice in the gift of Holy Communion, which we share today. Holding fast to the promise of the feast to come.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

