

Matthew 26:26-28
April 18, 2019 – MAUNDY THURSDAY – *Three Words of Truth* (NPH¹)

Take and Eat; Take and Drink

† Jesus eagerly desires your presence to graciously give you His presents.

Six weeks ago we were reminded that in the Old Testament God summoned Israelite men to Jerusalem three times each year on a pilgrimage for three high festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. In New Testament freedom our annual pilgrimage began Ash Wednesday – 40-day trek through the Passion History of our Lord, familiar places and faces...in spirit to this night in the upper room, tomorrow at the foot of the cross, and Sunday to the gloriously empty tomb. Our Lenten series this year has used three words of truth each week to focus our spiritual attention on what is important. *Is it I? Love One Another Watch and Pray I Am He What Is Truth? Take Him Away! Save Us Now!* Tonight two sets of *Three Words of Truth*: **Take and Eat; Take and Drink.**

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It's Maundy Thursday, *Command Thursday*, in the upper room when Jesus gave His commands for Lord's Supper and His new command: "***Love one another as I have loved you.***" Jesus spoke many comforting things to his disciples to prepare them for the excruciating day tomorrow. But He also acted on behalf of His disciples to give them the grace to endure. He did all this knowing who they are, what they will do. Jesus invites us to dine with Him – knowing who we are, what we all do. "***Come to me all you who are wear and burdened, and I will give you rest.***" (Matthew 11:28 NIV84)

When you stop and think about it, there are some serious questions about timing. Why would Jesus institute His Holy Supper "***on the same night in which he was betrayed***"? This was when men are at their worst. The Jewish religious leaders wanted Jesus dead long ago "***for calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.***" (John 5:18 NIV84) His disciples betraying Him, denying they would ever deny or leave Him, then arguing about who is the greatest. We have to stop ourselves and remember the Apostle Paul's advice: "***If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.***" (1Corinthians 10:12 NIV84) Instead of making Lent all about Jesus, they (we) want to make it all about our self. Terrible time! All of humanity – Jews, Gentiles – willingly sentence an innocent man to the cruelest death of all.

Why does Jesus institute His Holy Supper before He dies? He speaks of His body "***broken***" and His blood "***poured out***" before this even happens. This seems all the more strange that Jesus is offering forgiveness to disciples who cannot seem to take His warnings seriously. Remember *Watch and Pray*?

Then also in spite of intensifying plans to kill Jesus, the Jews were saying, "***But not during the feast...***" (Matthew 26:5) They feared a riot. Yet, here we are at the Passover! For 1500 years God's people kept commemorating His deliverance from slavery in Egypt using the blood of an unblemished yearling male lamb painted on their doorposts. That innocent blood saved them from death as the angel passed over Israelite homes and stopped at every Egyptian home to slaughter the firstborn son of man and animal. Passover ingredients as commanded: unleavened bread and wine. And then this comment of Jesus – really? "***I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.***" (Luke 22:15)

It helps to focus on the words of Jesus that surround our *Three Words of Truth*. First our ears must listen, then our other senses can follow by faith.

¹ 2019 Lenten series by Keith Wessel, *Three Words of Truth*. Northwestern Publishing House. Order: 1-800-662-6022.

“While they were eating” – Table fellowship is still strong in Middle Eastern culture. In America too, you don’t just walk into a restaurant and sit at any occupied table you choose. But here Jesus invites you because He eagerly desires your presence, even more than you can imagine.

“Jesus took” – determined, eager to give what God had promised. **“Bread”** – no need to tell them that it was unleavened Passover bread. He **“broke it”** – as Jesus’ body was **broken**, but not the bones. Broken wafers sometimes remind me of how Jesus’ body was **“broken”** for me. He **“gave it”** – as an inheritance gift unearned, unsoiled by human effort or ulterior motives. **“To his disciples”** – **“the twelve apostles”** (Luke 22:14) – reminding us that this Holy Supper was not meant for everyone coming in off the street. Through His Apostle Paul, Christ Jesus gives specific instructions. (1 Corinthians 10, 11) And historically Christ’s Church has worked faithfully to prepare themselves and new Christians to stand together in one, beautiful common-union of faith, Holy Communion.

“Take and eat” – *Three Words of Truth* – in a simple command to **take** with hand to mouth. No *Corpus Christi* parade here. Jesus is speaking His last will and testament in exact legal language not to be misunderstood. **“This is”** – see and taste bread used in His Holy Supper until Jesus’ Word makes it more. **“Is”** never means **“represents”**; any figure is in the noun, not the linking verb. Jesus eagerly gives a present with His promise: **“Surely I am with you always....”** (Matthew 28:20) What a foretaste of heaven! He says, **“This is my body”** – an unseen miracle neither they nor we would know without Jesus’ Word. A miracle gift of His **body** born of the virgin Mary, crucified for you, raised to life for you.

“Then he took the cup” – firmly again in determination for what lay ahead of Him. No need to say this was Passover wine in the cup. **“And offered / gave it to them”** – continuing His gracious presents for which He eagerly desires our presence. What we receive with our mouths, our hearts also receive by faith to our blessing. **“Drink from it, all of you.”** Did Judas drink too? Can’t tell for sure comparing the Gospel accounts, but here it seems Jesus is still trying to reclaim, not embarrass Judas. For **all** to drink as Christ invite remove all barriers of resentment, bitterness, sins against others, and false beliefs.

“This is” – again, no hint in this last will and testament of figurative eating and drinking. It is a supernatural, incomprehensible miracle which faith simply believes because Jesus cannot lie. Since all things are possible with God, Jesus has the power and love to do all He says. **“This is my blood”** – not some, not a drop or two, but all. Jesus gives Himself completely and fully to every communicant. And we need to know that **“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”** (Hebrews 9:22 NIV84)

This is **“my blood of the covenant”** – His New Covenant as prophesied by Jeremiah 31:31-34: **“I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”** Under the Old Covenant, the **“if”** killed us. **“If you obey, then you can be my people and I will be your God.”** The Israelites failed and so do we with every unkind thought, every angry word, every good deed left undone, or encouraging word left unspoken. God’s New Covenant is pure grace with Jesus giving us all the holiness God demands. He does everything, renewing and invigorating all who receive it by faith. God’s forgetful forgiveness is on display in His Holy Supper. Christ blood **“is poured out”** –drained like the Passover lamb, anticipating tomorrow on the cross. It is **“poured out for many”** – which in context means no one is excluded as **“many”** in this context clearly means **“for sinners all.”** Key words for you and me are recorded in Luke as well: **“Shed for you....”** (Luke 22:20) Again, all for you, **“for the forgiveness,”** literally, the **“sending away”** of all sin like the scapegoat on great Day of Atonement. They saw their sins gone forever in the wilderness, never to return, real **“of sins”** –heartache from failure, disobedience of God’s will: Forgiven!

In old Scandinavian churches the communion rail is a semi-circle. There the saints on earth join the invisible circle of saints and angels around God’s throne in heaven. Dear friends, the best banquet is yet to be. Jesus gives us His presents now in the forgiveness of sins. Soon all our senses will hold everyone close at last in full communion with God and each other – never ending. Amen.