

Maundy Thursday

April 2, 2015

I Tell You the Truth . . . Until I Drink It Anew in the Kingdom of God

Text: Mark 14:22-25

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Dearly loved by God in Christ Jesus our Savior,

It took three years for Leonardo Da Vinci to complete. To this day, one of the most popular works of Christian art in all the world is the 15 x 29 foot painting we call *The Last Supper*.

From the time da Vinci completed the work in 1498, it started to fall apart. Da Vinci, always the inventor, tried using new materials for this mural. Instead of using the customary wet plaster, he used dry plaster. What worked artistically did not work so well in durability. Almost immediately it began to flake off the wall, and people have been attempting to restore the original ever since.

Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* is not so lasting. Jesus' last supper is everlasting. Its blessings extend from "the same night in which he was betrayed" through eternity. This is the truth. Jesus told his disciples, **I Tell You the Truth . . . Until I Drink It Anew in the Kingdom of God.** Cherish the blessings of the past. Enjoy the blessings of the present. Look forward to the blessings of the future.

Tonight we return to the upper room, the scene of the original Last Supper. Jesus eagerly had looked forward to celebrate with his disciples the last Passover in history. Jesus made it the last Passover by being the perfect Passover Lamb the next day. The Passover's anticipatory aspect now ended.

Jesus and his disciples would cherish the blessings of the past. They reviewed the history of God's grace, particularly how God used lamb's blood painted on doorframes to keep his people safe as the angel of death passed over Egypt. They would have then recalled how God led Israel out of slavery with a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. Finally, the celebrants would have recalled the account of Moses parting the Red Sea. God's people passed through walls of water to safety. Those water walls come crashing down on the pursuing enemies.

As the disciples ate this meal and listened intently, they felt a connection to their past. They felt a connection to God as his people. They felt a connection to one another as this family history belonged to each one of them. It certainly was a special night, the most special night

of the year.

Jesus went on to make the occasion more special. "While they were eating," Jesus took the unleavened bread of the original Passover menu, and they heard him say, "This is my body." Then he took the cup of grape wine, offered it to them, and said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." Jesus' words made it very clear that this first supper with his disciples was something very special. This was a supper for them to enjoy the blessings of the present.

Jesus did not want the Passover to last because it was now useless. Jesus was there with his disciples ready to be the suffering and bleeding holy Lamb of God. Jesus' ultimate goal was not to dine with his disciples at the Last Supper. His goal is to dine with all of us at the lasting new covenant supper in the present.

Once again, Jesus grabs our attention: "I tell you the truth." "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." Jesus was telling his disciples that I need to leave you for a time. I must go to give up my body and pour out my blood for you. I cannot enjoy this meal with you any longer because I must go, and on the cross make it my holy supper of my gospel. Then you and all my future disciples will enjoy the blessings of my true body and blood.

The word Jesus wanted the disciples to lean on in the upper room was that preposition: "until." It is a word of promise and hope. So much of this night reviewed the past, God's grace and deliverance of his Old Testament people from Egypt. Much of this night is about the present, as Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, emphatically declaring, "This is my body and this is my blood which is being poured out for you."

Jesus' suffering was at hand. However, neither the emphasis on God's past deliverance nor his present offering of himself as the Passover Lamb would mean anything if there were no future. The future was there in that little word, "until."

It is that word, "until," that we lean on when we celebrate Holy Communion. Through the Lord's Supper, Jesus invites us to look back. We eat and drink in remembrance of him, recalling and proclaiming his death. Before we come to this table, Jesus wants us to examine ourselves. With the mirror of God's law as the tool for self-examination of our hearts will recognize that we are guilty of sinning against God and that we deserve his punishment. As we come to this table, Jesus wants us to look around and appreciate the blessing of unity we have

with those who stand at our side receiving his body and his blood. “*We, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf*” (1 Co 10:17). Above all else - looking back, looking in, looking around, as we come to this table and as we leave this table, our Savior invites us to look forward. Look forward to that day when *he drinks it anew with us in the kingdom of God*.

Jesus, as testified by his own words and promise, is miraculously present in this meal. Enjoy this meal tonight and every time you celebrate it. Hear the words Jesus your Savior spoke to you, “Take and eat, this is my body, given for you. Take and drink, this is my blood, shed for you.” Know that our Savior’s goal is not simply to dine with us as he did with his disciples at the Last Supper. No, he gave his body and blood so that we could have reservations with him at a lasting supper—a lasting supper where he eats and drinks with us anew in the kingdom of God.

What that heavenly banquet looks like, feels like, or tastes like, I do not know. It will be new in quality, something we have never experienced. No longer will we have to examine ourselves for sin because we will be confirmed in holiness, wearing the white robes of Christ’s blood and righteousness. No longer will we have to look around and be saddened that we cannot share this feast with everybody. In heaven, there will be perfect unity.

No longer will Jesus be with us only sacramentally. He will be with us visibly. No longer will we need to look ahead because we will be in the timeless day of forever and ever. This reality is breathtaking, filled with overwhelming joy that will never end. It will be a lasting supper. That is why

At the Lamb’s high feast we sing
Praise to our victorious King,
Who has washed us in the tide

Flowing from his pierced side. Alleluia! Amen. (CW 141:1) <SDG>