

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”

²³ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴ “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. ²⁵ “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.” (NIV 84)

Theme: I tell you the truth: Until I drink it anew in the Kingdom of God.

1. The Passover Meal
2. The Lord’s Supper
3. The Heavenly Banquet/wedding supper of the lamb.

The time was coming. Jesus had just a few short hours left with his disciples. Although they didn’t understand, as we will see on Easter morning, Jesus knew what was about to happen. In a matter of hours he would be arrested and then only a few choice words and a glance would be his only communication to his disciples. So Jesus decided to get his disciples together in a room so that he could teach them one last time and so that he could enjoy a meal with them without any distractions.

It was the night of the Thursday of Holy Week to us. But to the Jews, whose days consisted from sundown to sundown—when the sun went down on that Thursday it was now the 15th of Nissan. This was the day the Jews were to commemorate as a lasting ordinance. It was the day of the Passover. You may remember the first Passover—recorded by Moses in Exodus 12; we’ll read part of it as our first lesson later on tonight. It corresponds to the 10th plague, the killing of the firstborn. The angel of the Lord was going to go through all of Egypt and kill every first born male of both man and animal, unless they took a one year old male lamb without blemish or defect and spread its blood on the doorposts of their house. When God went through Egypt and saw the blood on the door post, he would pass over that house and not kill the firstborn living there.

This tenth plague and Passover led Pharaoh to allow Moses and the Israelites to leave Egypt. They would no longer be slaves; they would

no longer be oppressed. God had saved his people and brought the world’s superpower to its knees. And so they were to celebrate this meal for generations to come. Eating this meal led them to remember and praise God for his love and grace in saving his people from oppression and slavery and leading them to the Promised Land. Since Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb we no longer have to celebrate the Passover. It was a shadow to point us to Christ. Yet as the Jews ate that meal as a celebration of God’s grace we do well to remember God’s grace too. The Israelites did not deserve to be saved by the Lord; he did it out of his love and mercy. In the same way we deserve God’s wrath and punishment. We don’t deserve to be saved from the slavery of sin; yet God in his grace did just that!

It was during this Passover meal, this last supper with his disciples, that Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion. You know the words well—you hear them at least twice a month. The version which is printed in the hymnal is from a harmony of the four accounts of the words of institution: **Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”**

The Passover meal consisted of the one-year old male lamb roasted over a fire and unleavened bread with bitter spices to remind the people of the bitter experience they had in Egypt. By the time of Jesus, every Jew would have eaten the Seder meal as part of their Passover celebration. So that means that Jesus and his disciples drank several glasses of wine—most likely diluted with water.

So it was the unleavened bread that Jesus took and gave to his disciples as he said, **this is my body**. It is a cup filled with grape wine that he gave to his disciples and said, **this is my blood**. He also said, **do this in remembrance of me**. Do what? Do this. Do everything that Jesus did—the giving, receiving, eating, drinking, and saying. We do what Jesus did—eating the bread, unleavened bread, drinking the

fruit of the vine—grape wine; and saying the words he spoke to institute the Lord's Supper.

Those are the earthly elements, but what do we receive? Christ's true body and blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine. That is what Jesus meant when he said, **this is my body...this is my blood.**

All four are present in the Holy Supper. Paul makes it abundantly clear in 1 Corinthians 10 that all four are truly present in the Lord's Supper, **Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?**

So in the Lord's Supper the Lord gives us his true body and blood—the very thing that he gave up and shed on the cross to pay for our sins. So in the Lord's Supper, then, we receive the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus himself says this in Matthew when he says that this is **for the forgiveness of sins.**

2. Mark records Jesus saying about the wine, **this is my blood of the covenant.** Both Luke and Paul add the word new—**this is my blood of the new covenant.** You may remember a few weeks ago when we talked about the new covenant. It is the new agreement God made with his people as opposed to the Old Covenant given through Moses which demanded perfect obedience to God's commands. The New Covenant is that Christ kept the law perfectly for us. Because of him our sins are forgiven and our wickedness remembered no more. In the Lord's Supper we receive the New Covenant, which is the forgiveness of sins.

But why do you need it? Aren't you forgiven already by Christ's suffering and death on the cross? Wasn't your old Adam drowned and your sins washed away through the waters of baptism? If you are already forgiven, then why do you need the Lord's Supper? The devil attacks you each and every day. He reminds you of all the horrible things you have done. "Your despicable" he says, "You call yourself a Christian; but you act like an unbeliever. And yet, you expect God to forgive someone like you? There is no possible way that God can forgive all of the horrible things you have done." Satan tries to get us to fall into despair, to doubt that God loves us and forgives us.

It's like a wife who needs to be told "I love you" again and again, even though she already knows that her husband loves you. It's nice to hear it, it's good to be reassured. Here in this sacrament we are reassured of God's love—but more than that, we are fully and freely forgiven.

In his Holy Supper we taste and eat Christ's true body and blood; through this sacrament we receive a tangible forgiveness so we may know and not doubt that our sins are truly forgiven. For this body and blood of Christ, shed on the cross is for you—the forgiveness of sins is for you.

In verse 25 of our text, from which our theme comes, Jesus says, **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.** Here Jesus is saying that he would not drink the wine again until he was in his Father's kingdom. That word until points us to the future; it points us to a bigger and greater meal. It points us to heaven.

2. That is another reason why Jesus gives us his true body and blood in this sacrament. He doesn't just give us forgiveness; but he also blesses us by strengthening our faith. As he strengthens our faith he is leading us to eternal life—a life with him in heaven. And there in heaven we will partake of an eternal banquet with him. In Revelation 19 the angel refers to this banquet, **Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**

B. 1. In the prayer following the Lord's Supper in Divine Service II, we thank for the connection between his Supper and the banquet we'll enjoy in heaven. We pray in part, "We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament...By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb."

2. We don't know exactly what this heavenly banquet will be like. It won't be like anything we have ever experienced. But we do know it is ours. Because through the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross—which he gives us in this sacrament, our sins are forgiven. Eternal life is ours. This Holy Supper which he gives to us tonight is just a small foretaste of the Lamb's eternal wedding supper. For Christ will not only be with us sacramentally, but we will be with him physically and see him face to face. Amen.