

Today, at Jesus’ command, we focus on the Lord’s Supper. I say, “at Jesus’ command,” because that is the meaning of Maundy Thursday. The unusual word *Maundy* is an abbreviated version of the Latin “maundatum” from which we get the word ‘mandate.’ So, yes, it’s actually Mandate Thursday or Command Thursday. What’s the command? “This do in remembrance of me.” Eat of this bread and drink of this cup and in so doing, Jesus says, re-live what I did. That’s really the flavor of it. Not merely remembering information about Jesus as if you were taking a test; instead, it’s like stepping into the story yourself. This kind of remembering makes you a participant in the action.

Taken this way, the Lord’s Supper is nothing less than being touched by Jesus at His table. Here in this church, Jesus serves you His body and blood. We come here to be forgiven in a way that involves all of our senses. In Holy Communion, you come into contact with Christ, and you are changed. You can never be the same again.

At least that’s what the Lord’s Supper is supposed to be like. But how often is it that way for you?

Have you ever come to the Lord’s Table with no thanks in your heart? How often have you sung, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of your glory” with no lifting up of your heart—with no joy of sins forgiven?

Do you sense a closeness with Jesus as you commune? Do you open yourself up to him here?

One of the saddest, most misinformed views of the Lord’s Supper is from the person who says, “I don’t go to the Communion table unless I’ve really been improving in my spiritual life; unless I’ve really cleaned up the things I’ve done wrong, and have really become worthy of going.”

While it’s true that Saint Paul urges us to examine ourselves that we might receive the Sacrament in a worthy manner, that ‘worthiness’ is not based on personal goodness. The ‘worthy manner’ of Paul is trust that Jesus is hidden in bread and wine, and that He comes to this table to forgive our sins. The ‘worthy manner’ of Paul is, in fact, an admission of our *unworthiness* and the belief that Jesus eats with unworthy sinners, passing along forgiveness and acceptance which He purchased on the cross.

As the hymnwriter of “Rock of Ages” wrote: “Nothing in my hand I bring/Simply to thy cross I cling.” I bring nothing to the table, yet Jesus still meets me there to give me what I need most. In a blessing that faith comprehends, you participate in the body and blood of your Lord Jesus. You step into the story yourself. As you eat and drink, you receive Jesus.

For that reason, the Lord’s Supper is intensely personal. At the same time, we need to grasp the powerful community experience that’s happening here, too. Again, as Paul writes, “Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”

Maundy Thursday—the Thursday when Jesus gave the mandate, “Do this in remembrance of me”—is a time for renewal of Christian unity. It’s a time for a renewal of how we see each other. It’s a time for renewal in the mission we share of making disciples. It is a time to take a stand

together against Satan. We will not be such easy prey for our Enemy when we stay in fellowship with one another, and our fellowship is strengthened every time we come to the Lord's Table together. As much as it may bruise our pride, the truth is, we need each other. Alone, we stumble. United in Christ, we move ahead, doing far more together than we could ever do by ourselves.

A little girl once got lost in a large cornfield. It was winter, and the temperature was far below freezing. Rescuers searched for her for hours, but to no avail. Finally, one person suggested that the group start at one end of the field, and holding hands, survey the field in a systematic way. Finally, they found the child, who was in very serious condition. The father cried out to God, "Dear Lord, why didn't we join hands before?"

"Why didn't we join hands before?" Isn't it time to do that? It is time for renewal of our Christian unity. When we join hands, we do much better at finding the lost. Jesus will renew us in that unity at His Table. He will come and fill us with His gifts. Then He sends us out into the world as His ambassadors. Our participation in the body and blood of Jesus always leads to action. Will we join hands and go?

We all come to the Lord's Table for personal reasons. Our need for redemption runs deep. When you come to the altar rail today, look around. We're all receiving the same gift. By coming to the table, you're saying, I need the forgiveness that only Jesus can provide. The people with me here have the same need. And we have the same solution. We have the same Savior. That Savior has taught us to address God as our Father. Do you see what that makes us?

I want to make sure that this hits home with you, because we have some powerful enemies. The world, the devil, even human nature itself does not want there to be unity in God's family. Those forces are desperately trying to tear us apart. They have a vested interest in dividing us and turning us against one another. And they would, eventually, if we did not have Jesus in common. If we did not have His grace and mercy; if we did not have His redemptive love; if He did not first reconcile us to Himself there would be no reconciliation among us. If He was not here at His Table, there would be no agape, selfless, unconditional love to share. But He is. His Word is true. His heartfelt desire is to bring us together and keep us together around His Table.

So come, with all your sin; with all your burdens; with all your weakness. Come, with all your happiness; with all your thankfulness and joy. Come hungry for the forgiveness of your sins and the renewal of this family of faith. Come trusting in your Lord's promise that his body and blood were given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins. Come and feast, and let us join hands in the Lord.