

Take and Eat! Take and Drink!

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

"Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.

He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there."

They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Well, we made it. Holy week. This is the most important week for the entire year. Everything before like Christmas and Epiphany were leading up to this. Everything that follows like the Sundays after Easter and Pentecost, point back to it. You understand why. Everything we hope for, believe and teach hinges on the fact that the Son of God came to be the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. And his resurrection is proof God accepts that sacrifice. We are saved.

But I am sad for one reason tonight. I am going to miss those special Wednesday services. And I am going to miss the meals we had between those services on Wednesday. Those meals were special. Think about what happened in the basement. People gathered as the family. We enjoyed a good meal. We talked with each other. There was small talk and sometimes we shared joys or fears with one another. We served each other as groups took turns preparing the meals and cleaning up. A freewill offering was taken, but it wasn't pocketed. It was usually given over to some ministry here. Yeah, I advertised those meals as a way to make it easier for you to attend church on those Wednesdays, but there was more going on. We were fellowshiping. We were showing we are one family in Christ.

Lent is over and so are those meals. And I am not suggesting we should keep up the meals weekly; we could, but it might tax many of our members. But this meal is repeated at least twice a month when we celebrate Holy Communion. Tonight on the anniversary of Holy Communion we will hear not one but two three word quotes: take and eat; take and drink. With those words Jesus invites us to dine with him as the family of God.

I. Jesus invites us to his meal.

So, who are you having over for dinner this Easter? Maybe you will enjoy a quiet meal. Maybe your house will be crammed full of people. Who do you invite? Family, of course. Maybe a couple friends. Why don't you invite everyone on your block? That would be nice, but not practical. Why don't you invite over all the volunteer firefighters? That would be nice, but probably not possible. Whenever we invite people over, we usually have to limit it to only certain people. Engaged couples understand that. Sooner or later, because of the size of the hall, they have to limit the people they invite to their wedding. You do the same for a graduation or confirmation party, or Easter dinner. It is impractical to invite everyone.

Jesus says something very special in our text. ***"When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.""*** Jesus eagerly desired to eat this meal with his disciples, that is, the Passover meal. Think about it. That's odd. These disciples were on their good days argumentative and fickle. It seemed as though they didn't listen to anything Jesus said to them. In a matter of hours they will sleep when he needed their prayers. They would run away. They promised him many things but never followed through. Often they were playing a little game of tug of war as they argued who should sit at his right and left in heaven. The disciples hurt Jesus many times.

And yet, he eagerly desired to eat the Passover with them. He wanted to be with these ungrateful guests. But that is the reason he invited them. If the disciples were basically good, they wouldn't need to sit down with Jesus and eat with him. They wouldn't need Jesus. Jesus came not to heal the healthy. He came to heal the sick. Jesus came to offer himself on the cross because they were sick spiritually and by nature sinful and objects of God's wrath. If we weren't, he would have stayed in heaven and waited for us to come to him. But we can't, so he comes to us. So he eagerly desired to eat with sinners because he wants to save them.

I hope you and I can find great comfort for that invitation is offered to us as well. Jesus invites us to eat with him because we need him. The Bible tells us we need to examine ourselves before coming to Communion. But that is painful, so painful we sometimes don't want to. When we do, we are appalled by what we see. We see weakness. We see far too many times when

we fell for the devil's temptations. Sure, we had good intentions, but in the end we only failed God, again. We see pride, selfishness, greed, defiance. We had rain this week. It was good, clean water. Can you imagine if it rained garbage and sewage? Yuck. But that is what we find when we examine ourselves. Then we see a grave demanding our death. We see ourselves in hell with the rich man, begging for a drop of water on our tongues. We don't like what we see, and neither does God.

Yet, Jesus invites us. He tells us to come to him. He eagerly desires to eat and hang with us as he did with the tax collectors and Samaritans and prostitutes of his day. He went to them because they needed him. He invites us. And what does he offer? "Take and eat; take and drink," he says. To the world it looks like a sip of wine and a measly piece of bread. But you and I know better. He is giving us his own flesh and blood. He is offering us something special. He offers his very body and blood.

II. We become the redeemed family of God.

Take and eat; take and drink. Jesus tells us why, "**for the forgiveness of your sins.**" That's how God makes us part of his family. There is an interesting book out there called, "The Five Love Languages." The author says that there is more than one way to say, "I love you." For some people, it is touch. Holding hands while walking is a way to say I love you. The four other love languages include: words of affirmation, telling your spouse every so often how much you appreciate them; quality time as you spend more time together even if watching TV; acts of service where you volunteer to do something; receiving gifts as you give each other something special.

God forgives all our sins because of Jesus Christ. That very body and blood was given and shed so God can and does forgive our sins. Those are the most important words you will ever read in the Bible or hear with your ears. But God has many different ways of telling us how he loves, his own love languages. He also forgives our sins as we think about our Baptism and how our sins are washed away. He also forgives our sins in Holy Communion. There he involves our sight as we see the bread and wine, touch as we touch them and they touch our mouths; quality time as we come to the table; affirmation where God promises that everything between us is fine now because of this forgiveness.

And this is the blood of the new covenant as Jesus says. The old covenant was the law. It told us what we are supposed to do. It told us how to be like God. But it doesn't promise salvation. It can't save us because we can't keep it. That covenant promises only death for you. But God made a new covenant. If the old covenant promised your death if you sin, the new covenant promised the death of Jesus if you sinned. It is a covenant of promise, though your sins are as red as scarlet, you will be white as wool. In other words, God promises we are his family now, bought by Christ, adopted by his blood, and sharing in his inheritance.

And we come together as God's family. Like our Lenten meals where people from different families come together and eat and talk as one big Christian family, Communion shows us we are the family of God. We eat at his table. We are the body of Christ where one hurts we all hurt; where one is happy and we are all happy. We work together as the parts of the body work together. Each member has a function and purpose and each member needs others to do it. We are one big family, but not just here on earth. It unites us with all of our family who have already gone on into heaven. We will gather around another table up in heaven, the wedding table feasting with Christ and one another for eternity.

I will miss our Lenten suppers. I am not ready we do this once or twice a month from now on; I am afraid of having to organize it. But we do come together as family at least twice a month at the Lord's supper. He invites us to it. We share the very same body and blood that was given and shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins. We are now part of God's family. Amen.