

Maundy Thursday 2021, Return to the Table

1. Tonight, our Lord invites us to return to Him at the Table where He gives us His body and blood to nourish and strengthen our faith.
 - a. His invitation also draws us into fellowship with all believers gathered here.
 - i. And yet, we know our fellowship is stained by sin.
 - ii. Just as at that first Supper our Lord said, **“Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me, one who is eating with Me,”** (Mark 14:18) we have all betrayed our Lord in many ways as we have seen throughout our Lenten journey.
 - iii. Our task this evening is not to root out the offender or judge one another - that is God’s task, not ours.
 - iv. Instead, Jesus invites us to return to the table with the promise to make all things new, including us with His words, **“This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many”** (Mark 14:24).
 - b. At that Supper in the Upper Room Jesus fulfilled the first covenant that we read about in our OT lesson.
 - i. At Mt. Sinai God made a covenant with the children of Israel after delivering them out of Egypt: that He would be their God and they would be His special people in all the earth.
 - ii. After giving them all of the laws that define the covenant the people said, **“All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.”** (Ex 24:3)
 - iii. And when they had agreed to the covenant Moses took the blood of the sacrifices that had been made and threw it on the people saying, **“Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”** (Ex 24:8)
 - iv. The first covenant, that Israel would be God’s people through whom the Messiah would come, was sealed with blood – that covenant stood until our Lord fulfilled it in Himself and gave a new covenant in the Upper Room sealed in His blood.
 - c. But Israel would soon forget their promise to follow the Lord, just as we fail to live as God’s people today
 - i. They treated the things of God: the Law, the Temple, the sacrifices as ordinary things forgetting the power and the promise God offered through them.
 - ii. We too often forget the power and promise that God attaches to His gifts for us, treating our worship and even the sacrament as ordinary things forgetting where we are and Who is our host.

- iii. But God remained faithful to His promise to Israel and through them came Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world and He remains faithful to us even after our many betrayals of Him.
2. Dearly beloved, our Lord is here with His invitation to return to the feast at His table which is a foretaste of the feast to come, yet we often fail to recognize the magnitude of what we're doing here.
 - a. Imagine being invited to a great banquet at the White House.
 - i. I am sure that even if it were a frequent occurrence in our lives (which I know it isn't) we probably wouldn't treat it as common or trivial.
 - ii. I'm sure we wouldn't be looking around the room thinking about what we had to do later in the day wishing the whole event would be over soon
 - iii. I'm sure we wouldn't forget who our host was or forget to show the President respect, I don't suspect we'd treat the meal like carry-out from McDonald's.
 - iv. Yet how often do we do that in church? How often do we treat what we're about to receive tonight with the same indifference that we do fast-food?
 - b. Don't be fooled by the humble surroundings or the simple food that is before you.
 - i. This invitation is not from the President, but from someone far more important the "Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God," the One "by whom all things were made" (Nicene Creed).
 - ii. And while this sanctuary is not the White House; it is also the banquet hall of heaven!
 - iii. And the people who have been invited might be just ordinary folk not powerful heads of state, but they are also redeemed by the blood of Christ, children and heirs of of the King!
 - iv. The food isn't chateaubriand, it appears to be mere bread and wine, but carries the promise of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.
3. Christ extends His invitation again and again, week after week, because we need what He offers here to strengthen us and nourish our faith.
 - a. Maybe that's why it becomes routine and mundane in our minds.
 - i. But the Lord is calling us to open our eyes and return to His table with joy knowing exactly what it is that we receive.
 - ii. In this meal the host serves the guests for their benefit with His own body and blood.
 - iii. This Meal covers our sins and strengthens our faith so that we can serve God and our neighbor.
 - iv. This Meal not only binds us to our Lord but also to our brothers and sisters in Christ as Paul reminds us in I Cor 10, "**Because there is one bread, we**

who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” (1Co 10:17).

- b. We rejoice in all that Christ gives us in the Meal we share here on earth.
 - i. But as amazing as this Meal is, never forget that this is merely a foretaste of what God has in store for you.
 - ii. This bit of bread and this sip of wine is just a teaser for the sumptuous feast we will one day share when all the saints of God come together for the wedding feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end.
- c. You have heard me say it before, but it bears repeating we live in the “now but not yet.”
 - i. A time when we receive the benefits and the gifts that God has for us today, right now.
 - ii. But we also know that what we experience now cannot compare with what will be on the Last Day.
 - iii. Today’s gifts sustain us and build our anticipation for the feast to come.
 - iv. May you rejoice in the gift of Holy Communion, which we share together today, and hold fast to the promise of the full feast to come.