

Maundy Thursday
Text: 1 Cor 11:23-32
Rev. Jason Zirbel
April 13, 2017

Christ – Handed Over

Tonight our study of *paradidomi*—handing over—focuses on Holy Communion. Guys: What am I going to say on this that you don't already know or believe? Here is Christ, physically, truly, tangibly being handed over to you, to eat and drink for the forgiveness of all your sin. Here is the very body and blood of Jesus Christ being handed down to you from heaven. Here is Jesus Christ, stooping down and kneeling down from heaven to feed you, nourish you, and give you His peace, which surpasses all understanding.

And that's the big kicker. ***All this is beyond human understanding.*** This is all apprehended, believed, and cherished through faith alone. Absent the eyes of faith, all you're gonna see is a little flavorless wafer of bread and a little bit of sweet red wine; mere symbols that represent an absent, distant Savior, who has promised to be with us always. But...you have that faith, and I praise and thank God for that. You see it. ***You see Him.*** Through the opened ears and eyes of humble, repentant, saving faith, you recognize your Lord and Savior in these humble means of grace.

So here's the old Lutheran question then: What does this mean? ***What does this mean to you?*** You get it. I know you do. ***But...what does this mean to you?*** We know what's going on here. We know who's at work and what He's doing here with His body and blood. We know that we come to this table empty-handed. We bring nothing to this table. This isn't a business boardroom table, where deals are struck and treaties are signed. This is God's feast table, where His victorious Passover feast of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, is placed into our mouths and is ***faithfully, inwardly digested*** for our life, our forgiveness, and our salvation. We do bring one thing to this table—thanksgiving—***but that's it. We come empty-handed.*** We come bearing our sacrifice of thanksgiving, calling upon the name of the Lord, and giving thanks for the life-giving, life-saving gift of peace He is handing over and handing down to us in that moment; that point-in-time that transcends all time; where heaven and earth collide; where angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven are gathered around that one-and-the-same Christ, praising and worshipping and feasting with Him at the very same time we are. It's awesome! It's humbling! It's beyond words!

So...I ask again: What does all this mean to you? Catechetically, I know you understand what's going on here. Theologically and theoretically, you understand what all this is, ***but...do you get it?*** Consider the fact that Jesus Christ instituted this new covenant of peace and handed this blessed gift of grace over less than one hour before all hell would break loose in the lives of His beloved disciples. Jesus knew exactly what was about to happen. He just finished praying

for them, that not one of them would be lost. He just finished praying that they be strong and remain grounded in the faith, even as they're hated and persecuted. He doesn't ask His heavenly Father to spare them from all discomfort, harm, and fear. *"I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. Sanctify them in the Truth; Your Word is Truth."*

Immediately upon praying this prayer, the prayer is already being answered. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread.... He then took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, of all of you...." Again, your Lord Christ knew **EXACTLY** what was about to happen within the next hour and over the course of the next few days. He knew how *utterly devastated and shell-shocked* they would be. He knew how *terrified* they would be. He knew...and He gave them the very medicine they needed for their souls and the preservation/perseverance of the faith.

And then one of the very first things He does three days later in His resurrection is join in table fellowship with His beloved. Just think of the two Emmaus disciples. Their eyes were opened and they were *finally able to recognize their risen Lord* when He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them to eat. Ever since then, the faithful have recognized the gift of Christ—*not merely a gift from Christ, but the gift of Christ Himself*—in the ordinary elements He hands down and hands over to us.

And nothing has changed. All these centuries later, and He's still handing Himself over to us for the *same exact reason*—for our peace, our assurance, our confidence, our forgiveness...our life. This is precisely why I ask, *"Do you get it?"* Yes, we know all the Small Catechism facts about this sacrament. We know what the Bible says. We even believe it. And yet...when life hits the fan, where do we look? Where do we flee to? When the darkness of sin, death, and despair overtakes us; when it looks like all hell is breaking loose, *where/what do we reach out to in faith?* To what/whom does our faith look to hold onto and embrace? Where do you find true peace? Perhaps a better question is: *Where do you look for true peace?*

Dear fellow redeemed: Here is Christ, holding out to you; handing over to you the very peace that is Himself and His victory over sin, death, and the grave. Here is the rest of the story. Here is how your story ends. You win! You win because Christ has won! I say all this because the world we live in is a *crazy, scary, unkind, unforgiving, and unfair place...and it's not getting any better*. No good deed goes unpunished. Nice guys get dumped on, while the wicked, unscrupulous people—the real cutthroats—always seem to get ahead. *Virtue is ridiculed while vice is celebrated*. Nobody likes to lose, and nobody likes to be disliked or hated. The temptation to give in and sell out and go along with the rest of this fallen and sinful world is all around us, and even comes from within us;

from our own fallen and sinful flesh. There is nothing new under the sun. Just like our first parents, we look to the forbidden fruits that world has to offer, and it all seems very appealing and pleasing to the eye. It scratches us right where we itch. Go along and get along, right? Life is just *easier* that way. What's a person to do?

Trust your ears. Don't trust your eyes. Don't trust your heart. Your heart is a *terrible* guide, for out of the heart of Adam comes hatred, murder, theft, adultery, and all kinds of other sin and death that has been handed down to us from our first parents. ***Trust your ears. Trust what your Lord tells you.*** "Take and eat. Take and drink. This is My body. This is My blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sin." Here is Christ. Here is the confidence, the assurance, the comfort, and the peace to endure and persevere; to faithfully bear your respective crosses as you run the race God has given you, ***in the world, but not of the world.*** My prayer is that you get it; that you recognize, rejoice, and hunger and thirst for this life-saving, life-giving, peace-bestowing gift that Christ wants nothing more than to give to you. May this ***Christocentric reality*** be, not a last resort or a mere rote motion you go through as you belly up to the bar with the rest of the herd or a superstitious action you think you can do to try and make the genie in the lamp happy, but may it be ***your confidence, your assurance, your comfort, and your peace;*** a peace that surpasses all human understanding and is known only in the humility of repentant saving faith, may this joy and peace of Christ and His victory be yours, now and into all eternity.

AMEN