

## Maundy Thursday

March 28, 2024

Mark 14:22-26

**Mark 14:22-26: <sup>22</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.” <sup>23</sup> Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup> “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. <sup>25</sup> “Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” <sup>26</sup> When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.**

I want to take you to two rooms during this sermon. One you are expecting; The Upper Room in First Century Jerusalem on that First Holy Thursday. And one you are not expecting; a room on the Jerry Seinfeld Show in 20<sup>th</sup> Century New York. What we learn in one room will illuminate something in the other.

Both revolve around a meal. In the Upper Room we find the remnants of the Passover Meal; specifically some unleavened bread and wine. On the Jerry Seinfeld Show the meal consisted of soup. In one of the more famous episodes Jerry, Elaine, George queue up in order to get what is supposedly the best soup in all of New York. But a key question revolves around who is worthy of eating that soup. And the person who ultimately decides is evocatively named the Soup Nazi. And the episode has become memorable for the segment when Elaine violates the code and ends up sent off with the show’s famous line: “No soup for you!”

What prompts the “No soup for you” tagline? Apparently, a long list of violations, some clear, some unclear, but all ending any hope of getting that soup.

The question is the essentially the same in the Upper Room on that Holy Thursday; who is worthy of eating that meal? Of course it is Jesus, it can only be Jesus, the instituter of that meal who decides. And what does Jesus say? In our text: **“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”** And in Matthew 26: **“Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.”**

And in addition Luke records the words of Christ: **“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you”** Jesus on that first Communion was eager for this meal and offered this meal to them. And to this day Jesus wishes to share this precious meal with you, he offers this meal to you. It makes Him happy to see you coming up to the front. It gives Him joy to see you holding out your hand to take the bread that is more than bread and wine that is more than wine. It thrills Him to have to draw close to Him in this

mystical meal. But is there anything that could lead Jesus to exclaim “No supper for you!”?

Actually, there are two things. You see, the Lord’s Supper isn’t for everyone. St Paul points out clearly, **I Corinthians 11:28-29** “**Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.**” The words themselves are clear enough. If someone is unable to recognize the body, blood, bread and wine in the sacrament, if a person is unwilling to recognize the body, blood, bread and wine in the sacrament, if a person is ignorant of the body, blood, bread and wine in the sacrament, then the Bible decrees they should not take Communion. And it becomes the Worship Leaders responsibility to carry out God’s wishes by refraining from offering Communion to those people.

There is something else that Jesus says excludes a person from the Lord’s Supper; and that is not recognizing the need, thinking that somehow my sins aren’t big enough or often enough or grievous enough to necessitate taking Communion. This why we always have the confession of sins before the Lord’s Supper. It gives us, it gives me, the chance to see just how desperate I am in my need. For a person to think “I’m good enough on my own” automatically disqualifies them from the Sacrament. Those are the two things that would merit the exclamation “No Supper for you!”

But let me tell you what won’t lead Jesus to ban you. Your fallenness. This is where those words recorded in Luke have so much meaning: “**I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you.**” Really? Sitting around a table with men who time and time again had demonstrated that they understood very little of what he was trying to teach them? “Eagerly desired” Really? With a group of disciples who would completely abandon him in the Garden of Gethsemane only a few hours after this and he knew it? “Eagerly desired” Really? Even though shortly before this they had been jostling and elbowing for positions around the table, bickering and bantering about which one of them showed the most promise or was the most indispensable in the God’s Kingdom.

That’s quite the crew gathered there in that room; don’t you think? Be that as it may, the words of Jesus remain: “**I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you.**” And then he says: “**Take it, this is my body**”, and he continues “**drink from it all of you.**” It is comforting to know that Jesus “**eagerly desired**” to eat with his disciples, weak and wandering though they were, because we can feel at home at that table, being just as weak and wandering. It is beautiful to know, that it was to those flawed human beings who fell, and who would fall in the future, Jesus without hesitation, speaks to them: “**Take it**” and “**Drink from it all of you**”.

It’s painful to see who we really are. To see failure after failure, promise after broken promise. But worst is to see defiance—that sinful nature rearing its ugly head and defiantly ignoring God.

The more one meditates on how we live, the more we are led to wonder, should I even go up for communion today?

But all this stumbling, all this weakness, all this defiance, all this frail humanity rolled into a great big ball of contradictions is precisely the person Jesus eagerly desires to eat with. The flawed, the sinners, the wicked, that's who Jesus offers it to. Jesus desires to eat with you. Jesus offers his meal to you. You see in God's Kingdom it isn't so much about the guests; it's about the host. And the host is our Savior, the friend of sinners.

He ate with the Twelve, those men who showed such little faith.

He ate with Zacchaeus, the scam artist.

He ate with other tax collectors too—and prostitutes and various other assorted sinners.

And now He wishes to share His table, His very body and blood, with you. He knows you; and still invites you to join Him.

Oh, the privilege. Oh, the joy! Oh, the forgiveness. Let us revel in peace of a meal offered, desired to be given to people like us. Amen.