

## Sermon 4/13/17 Maundy Thursday Covenant Meal Matthew 26:27-28

Dear Partakers of our Lord's Body and Blood:

On this Holy Thursday, the Church celebrates the institution of the Lord's Supper. The words of Christ's institution recall the covenant that the Lord made with His people through Moses in Exodus 24:8-11.

- The covenant the Lord made with the Israelites was confirmed with the shedding of sacrificial blood
- The blood of God's Son, Jesus Christ, poured out on the cross has sealed once for all the forgiveness of sins and salvation for you and me.
- In this covenant Meal of the Lord's Supper, we gratefully receive the gift of Christ's body and blood once given and shed on Calvary
- We enjoy this fellowship with the Lord, our Creator and Redeemer

When God made covenants with His people it often involved the shedding of sacrificial blood.

- When God made His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, Abraham cut the animals in two and laid them in such a way that the Lord could pass through the middle of them.
- When God made His covenant with Israel through Moses it was also sealed by the death of a sacrificial victim. The blood of the animal was poured out upon the altar and upon the people while Moses spoke these words: "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words." Exodus 24:8

What was the point of all this blood and death?

- It was to show the seriousness of sin
- Sin has consequences - God told Adam "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" Gen 2
- St. Paul says that "the wages of sin is death" Ro 6:23
- The sacrificial rites reminded God's people that sin was a serious matter, that they should not "think of sin but lightly"

The rites also showed the extent of God's wrath toward sin.

- God doesn't wink at our sins.
- He is holy and hates sin. He is angered by the disobedience of His people.
- He is a just God and He cannot let sin go unpunished. There must be death and blood.
- God's wrath needed to be satisfied
- But God does not desire the death of the sinner...you and me...He provided a substitute for us.

These sacrifices --- as horrifying as they were --- were also reminders of the depths of God's love.

- God does not delight in death
- He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked
- He would prefer that people would turn from their evil ways and fear, love and trust in Him

These bloody sacrifices were simply a means to an end.

- The Bible says: "You will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.**" Ps 51

God desire has always been to have fellowship and reconciliation with His people.

- That is why He goes to such great lengths to establish His covenant with the people
- Where sacrifices were offered, a meal often followed between God and His people.

In Exodus 24 God made His covenant with Israel through Moses and it was confirmed by the shedding of blood. Moses took half of the sacrificial blood from the animal and threw it on the altar making atonement for the sins of the people.

- The other half of the blood Moses threw 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
- This was followed by a covenant meal in which Moses and Aaron along with the 70 elders of Israel ate and drank in God's presence on the mountain.

- They enjoyed table fellowship with the Lord, the God of Israel...they dined in the presence of God...they were able to approach God because of the sacrificial blood.

The process of making a covenant with God was a bloody one. This throwing of blood against the altar signified access to God. Moses would later explain: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.” Lev 17:11

Covenants were established and confirmed between God and His people and were sealed by the sacrificial death of an animal.

This showed the extent of God’s wrath toward sin.

- The sacrifices were reminders to the people of the seriousness of their sin
- They were also reminders of their need for atonement
- God’s wrath must be satisfied
- “But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year” Hebrews 10:3

On the other hand, the fact that God provided substitutes for the people showed the depth of His love.

- He did not wish them to die because of their sins
- **“As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live...for why will you die...? Ezek 33:11**

God’s justice and mercy are both resolved in the sacrifices of innocent substitutes.

- Justice is served because blood is shed
- Mercy is shown by taking His wrath out on something besides the guilty party

Clearly this was a significant event in the life of Israel. A foundational event that would be remembered throughout all the generations of Israelites.

- God had fulfilled His promise to Abraham
- He had led His children out of Egypt
- He had established His covenant with His people

We are reminded tonight that this first covenant between God and Israel was only temporary.

- It was incomplete
- The blood of bulls and goats could only sanctify for the purification of the flesh
- Something more was needed.
- Something more was coming.

The Lord told Israel that something more was coming: **“Behold, the days are coming...when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...” Jer 31:31**

This covenant would surpass even the glory of that first covenant for it would be known by the forgiveness of sins. The Lord told His people about this new covenant in the Old Testament: “For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” Jer 31:34

A new and greater covenant also meant that a new and greater mediator and sacrifice would be needed. For “there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood.” Heb 9:22

Who else could make such a sacrifice but the holy and spotless Son of God? Who else could secure “an eternal redemption” for sinners except the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ? Jesus became the “mediator of a new covenant” shedding His precious blood on Calvary once for all for sinners.

As Moses once sprinkled blood on the altar to make atonement for the people, so Christ, our greater Moses, made atonement for the sins of all people as His blood was splashed upon the altar of the cross.

- By His innocent blood, the righteous anger of the Father has been satisfied forever.
- For every sin that Adam and his fallen children commit, for every infraction of the Law of God, for every sinful desire, there now stands a perpetual sacrifice in the cross.

Moses not only threw the blood on the altar he also threw it on the people.

- Jesus Christ has done the same for you and me.
- His blood has been sprinkled on you and me in our Baptism
- Our souls have been cleansed by the purifying blood of Christ
- The Bible says we “were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death.” Ro 6:4
- **“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” I Cor 6:11**

So we are covered. Our sins are no longer a stench in the nostrils of God. They no longer stand against us to accuse us or condemn us, for we are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

As a confirmation....and pledge of the covenant that God has made with us....Jesus has also instituted a covenant meal.

This emphasis on Jesus’ own blood is expressed in Hebrews 9: “He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood.”

Jesus blood like that of the sacrificial animal of the old covenant is “poured out” for many, meaning that the violent shedding of His blood has salvific purposes.

- “poured out” in the Greek New Testament means “violent slaying”
- Jesus’ blood was “thrown against” the altar of the cross to atone for all sin

We are urged, then, as it says in Hebrews to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” 10:22

The washing of Christian Baptism is followed by the covenant meal of the Lord’s true body and blood. Our bodies have been washed with clean water and our hearts have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience so that we may “draw near” to God and eat and drink in His presence.

On the eve of His crucifixion Christ met with His disciples to celebrate the Passover. And He instituted this new covenant saying: “Take, eat, this is My body.” He took the cup and gave it to them and said, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Mt 26:28

Jesus uses the same word here that Moses did when he instituted the old covenant. The difference between Moses and Jesus is this: Jesus says “This is MY blood of the covenant”...His blood, not the blood of some ox or goat, is what is being poured out on the altar of the cross for guilty sinners. His blood and not someone else’s, will be poured into chalices for Christians to drink until the end of time.

Tonight, we come not to celebrate an old covenant, but the new covenant in Jesus’ blood.

- We rejoice that God has made His covenant with us through the death of His holy Lamb
- He has established the salutary gift of the Lord’s Supper for us Christians to eat and to drink

Like Moses and Aaron and his sons and the 70 elders of Israel, we, too, “behold God and eat and drink”.

- Here we have Table fellowship with our God
- This is truly God’s mountain --- not Mt Sinai but Mt Zion...the Church...where we behold God and live

In this meal of the new covenant, we receive the gifts of Christ’s true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. We receive these holy gifts with thanksgiving remembering His sacrificial death for our sins.