

This Sunday's texts:  
Exodus 12:1-17  
Revelation 5:1-14  
Matthew 26:17-30

**Thy Kingdom Come**  
**Pastor Jim Cords**  
**February 19, 2023**

The holy Gospel from Matthew, the 26th chapter:

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You want us to make preparations for You to eat the Passover?" He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with My disciples at your house.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, He said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me." They were very sad and began to say to Him one after the other, "Surely You don't mean me, Lord?" Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with Me will betray Me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely You don't mean me, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "You have said so." While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is My body." Then He took a cup and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My father's kingdom." When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The gospel of the Lord. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we ask that by the power of Your Holy Spirit at work in our hearts and minds, You will give us faith to believe Your promises. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Joe, I listened and in the announcements, you acknowledged that this was the last Sunday of the Matthew series. I'm almost surprised you realized that because how can you not end the Matthews series with the Great Commission in Matthew 28? That's what I was thinking all week as I was looking at these texts, wondering why in the world did Joe choose chapter 26 and not chapter 28. There must be something going on here and as I studied and as God moved, I discovered

the brilliance of this selection. I thank you for allowing God to work through you to lead me, and now us, into the power of these texts and what they revealed to us, especially to us who come out of the Lutheran heritage, that recognizes the power of God's promise and the power of God to do the very thing He says He will do.

I want us to think about our understanding of God. I think, sometimes from a philosophical place, we even want to say the very definition of God is that God is all-powerful. But I want to ask you if, as we begin today, you believe that God is able to do what God says He wants to do. That's going to be very important as we move forward because our confidence is indeed that God does what He says, that His promises are true, and that we can rely on them and live in that reality and hope.

Of course, we began this morning looking at the Old Testament setup for this institution of communion that we find in the gospel of Matthew. In that, we begin to hear why the Passover story is such a formative story for God's people throughout history. In part, it's that way because God set it up to be that way. God rescues the people of Israel from the slavery and bondage of Egypt and He leads them out to the Promised Land, protecting them, not only from the wrath of God, but from the wrath of the Egyptians and leads them into their own land, where He fulfills His promises, where He protects and provides for them, even as they journey in the wilderness. He says to His people this is the beginning of every year and every year needs to begin with you remembering and celebrating together that I am a God who rescues you, that I am a God who sets you free from bondage, that I am a God who protects and provides, and that God has not changed.<sup>1</sup> So we too are encouraged to remember that that's who our God is.

Now I want to just say, because some people have a tendency to idealize and distort, it's important that you remember that the people of Israel cried out to God when things were not going the way they wanted them to go, the way they needed them to go. When they were suffering and they were struggling, they cried out to God and God proved to be, and reminds them annually, is a God who hears the prayers of His people and responds. Brothers and sisters in Christ, it's a part of why we're called to be a people of prayer because God hears us.

Then, in Joe's wisdom or some incredible prompting of the Holy Spirit, he turned to Revelation. As you heard the language of Revelation, you heard this phrase acknowledged in some "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain."<sup>2</sup> Now I don't know if you noticed it or not, but it was kind of an interesting little setup for John in

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 12:14, 17

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 5:12

this Revelation because the scroll was revealed, everybody was sad because there was no one worthy to open the scroll, and finally, someone says to John “Don’t cry! Don’t weep! The *Lion ... of Judah ...* is worthy to open the scroll.”<sup>3</sup> The *Lion of Judah*! But he didn't see a lion. He saw a lamb that looked like it was slain.

God's power, God's victory over sin and death, over bondage and struggle and pain does not always look like the victorious image we like to bring to our minds. God's victory over sin and death came through the sacrifice of His Son for us. So while we're out there looking for lions, we might want to pay attention to the bleeding lamb. That is we might want to remember that God shows up in God's way, according to God's plan, that there's a connection between how God began this with His people, freeing them from bondage in Egypt, and how He will be and is, in fact, already at work to make sure that our sins are forgiven. We don't have to be afraid. We don't have to feel the shame and guilt of our sin because Jesus paid the price.

I've said it a number of times. I'll probably say it many more that I just pray and hope that somehow the phrase “good old Lutheran guilt” will be kicked out of our vocabulary. And maybe instead we'll say “good old Lutheran grace,” “good old Lutheran love,” “good old Lutheran forgiveness,” “good old Lutheran victory in the lamb who was slain for you and for me.”

Jesus sits at the table on the night He was betrayed. Doesn't sound like a lion. Doesn't sound like a victory meal. As a matter of fact, it sounds like a loser. In fact, it's portrayed, as it moves forward, as among the worst things. He's betrayed by his best friend. He's humiliated in front of everybody. He's naked and nailed to a cross where He suffers unimaginable pain and a humiliating death.

Knowing what's coming, He says “this is My blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>4</sup> There's a new covenant happening, a new covenant that Jesus' death and resurrection establishes. So often, when I'm presiding at Communion, I will find a way to throw in the words, “Come and receive Christ anew in this holy sacrament.” Understanding that as we receive the bread and wine, we receive the promised presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ who gave His life for you, for your forgiveness, to remind you that you are connected to His sacrifice so that your sin is paid for and taken away. We don't have to continue to live in the sorrow of our sin. We can now begin to live in the victory of our redemption. That's why we want to remember that each time we

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<sup>3</sup> Revelation 5:5

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 26:28

come to the altar. Jesus promises “This is my body ... [and] blood [given for you] ... for forgiveness.”<sup>5</sup>

We have some differences in our various Christian denominations over the doctrine of sacraments. I had a phenomenally great experience, at one point in Tucson, when a very particular son of a Missouri Synod pastor asked me to instruct his girls in communion. I knew that whatever I taught and however I taught it was going to be examined quite carefully. So I did what any good and wise pastor would do. I turn to Luther himself and I opened up, not the Small Catechism, but the Large Catechism. Now some people assume that the Small Catechism is a summary of the Large Catechism. Not the case! Luther wrote the Small Catechism so fathers, especially in that day, could teach their children about the basic truths that we believe in the faith. Then he took that Small Catechism and gave a series of sermons on them. Those sermons were made into the Large Catechism. So the Large Catechism is really expounding upon the Small Catechism.

In that Large Catechism, as Luther introduces the truths of the sacrament, what you discover is that it's all about the authority of God's word. It's all about believing that God does what God says He will do. It's rooted in this faithfulness. Interestingly enough, Luther recognizes that it's a struggle to believe in transubstantiation, that is the bread and the wine changing into the body and blood, because you look at it, and it still looks like bread and it still looks like wine, if you can call that little wafer bread, but you know what I'm saying. So he gives us the phrase “in, with, and under the bread and wine,” Jesus is really present. When He offers the bread and wine, He's offering Himself for us, for our forgiveness.

I want us to remember, as we think about that, who He is. A couple of weeks ago, we heard clearly from the mouth of Peter that “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”<sup>6</sup> You are the Anointed One. You are the King and the Lamb - the King, the One in authority, the one who sits at the right hand of the Father who will judge the living and the dead, and the Lamb who is slain for you to create a covenant, a connection which, in truth, determines and changes who we are.

In these words of Jesus, in this giving of His life, in this giving of forgiveness, in the giving of the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are made children of the Living God. Our identity is now rooted in His promise of what He determines we are. We are *His* children. And we are now a part of His kingdom.

I want you to hear again these words at the end of Matthew 26. It says, “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 26-28

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 16:16

when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.”<sup>7</sup> In My Father’s kingdom. My fellow Lutherans, we have typically not in the Lutheran Church heard a great deal about “kingdom.” I just want to remind you that Matthew uses the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” rather than “Kingdom of God,” but it essentially means the same thing. Matthew, as a writer, honors the name of God and so doesn't use that word, but it means God's sovereignty, God's power, God's authority is coming. They're showing up in Jesus. Right from the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, of His own preaching, He uses the very same words of John the Baptist by saying “the kingdom of Heaven [God] is near.”<sup>8</sup> The kingdom of God is at hand.

The rule, the sovereignty, the power of God is showing up because it's coming in Jesus. He is the One that bears that power and authority. He is the One who is worthy to receive honor and glory and power. “From then on,” it says in Matthew 4, “Jesus began to preach, “Turn from your sins and turn to God because the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”” The Kingdom of Heaven is near.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I want to suggest to you that the gift that came to me this week in looking at these texts, thanks to you, Pastor Joe, is a realization that the kingdom of God is here [points down to where Pastor Jim is standing], that wherever Jesus is, His Kingdom is and that sense we have been made a part of His family, we have become inheritors of His power and authority. In fact, in the Great Commission, we are authorized and sent to be ambassadors of reconciliation in His name. That means if Jesus is with you wherever you go, He goes and wherever He goes, His Kingdom goes. The power, the authority, the presence of the King, establishing His reign and authority, goes wherever you go because Jesus is with you.

What does that mean? It means we don't have to be afraid. It means we don't have to carry ourselves with guilt. It means we don't have to be defensive. We can simply be bearers of the love and grace of God which goes with us everywhere we go.

I remember as a parent, especially when the kids were in their young teens and they would ask to go to a party, asking “Who's going to be there? What parent is going to be there? Do I know them? Have I met them? You can't go unless I do. Is it going to be safe where you go? ...” Brothers and sisters in Christ, I want to suggest to you because of the authority and the promise of God, you are always safe. He is always with you. His power, His authority, and on Easter, we celebrate,

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 26:29 (KJV)

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 4:17 (NLT)

the very power that raised Jesus from the dead is ours as His children, as His ambassadors, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now I know, and Luther knew. He said people are going to say. How can bread and wine do such things? How can water do such things? He says water by itself is only water, but with the Word of God, it is life-giving water.<sup>9</sup> Bread is only bread and wine is only wine, but with the Word of God, it is life-giving.<sup>10</sup> It brings with it the very thing Jesus promises comes with it. This is what we're calling faith in God, not faith in us, not faith in bread, not faith in wine, not even faith in the word, but faith in God, who with His word moves and acts and changes the reality in which we live.

And we go from this place, closing this series on Matthew, to a new place, a wonderful place. Over the course of the next weeks of Lent, we're going to be talking about the topic, "lifestyle of Grace." What does it mean to live in the faith of the promise, of the presence and power and forgiveness of God in each and every day, in each situation that we face, in each hardship, in each pain, and in each struggle, knowing that the God we worship is faithful? He's able.

Let me close with these words, even though I'm probably already long. "Just as God's name is holy in itself," Luther writes in the Large Catechism, "and we still pray that it be holy among us, so also His kingdom comes of itself, without our prayer, yet we still pray that it may come to us, that is, triumph among us and with us, so that we may be a part of those people among whom His name is hallowed and His kingdom prospers. But what is God's kingdom? Answer: Nothing other than what we learned in the Creed, God sent His son Jesus Christ our Lord into the world to redeem and deliver us from the devil's power. He sent Him to bring us to Himself, and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life, and salvation against sin, death, and an evil conscience, for this reason, He has also given us His Holy Spirit, who is to bring these things home to us by His holy Word, and to illuminate and strengthen us in faith by His power. We pray here. We pray here that this may happen with us. We pray that His name may be so praised through God's holy Word and a Christian life that we who have accepted it may abide and daily grow in it, and that it may gain approval and acceptance among other people. We pray that it may go forth with power throughout the world. We pray that many may find entrance into the Kingdom of Grace, that they may be made partakers of redemption and be led to it by the Holy Spirit, so that we may all together remain forever in the one Kingdom now begun."<sup>11</sup> Lord Jesus, Thy kingdom come. Amen.

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<sup>9</sup> See Large Catechism, Part Fourth, Holy Baptism, 14

<sup>10</sup> See Large Catechism, Part Fifth, The Sacrament of the Altar, 13

<sup>11</sup> Large Catechism, Part Third, The Second Petition, 50-52