

Matthew 26:26-28  
Maundy Thursday  
Lord Jesus, Abide with Me  
Forgiveness Pledged and Sealed

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**<sup>26</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 and eat; this is my body.” <sup>27</sup> Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “ Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”**

Those words take us back to the night on which our Savior was betrayed. He and His disciples had gathered together to celebrate the Passover and as they ate, Jesus instituted His Holy Supper saying, **Do this in remembrance of me** (Luke 22:19). In four different places in Scripture we find this event recorded showing us just how important it is and making the words which Jesus spoke certain, clear, and without question.

We come back to those words again and again because we want to remind ourselves of the peace that is ours through this blessed Sacrament. Tonight, as we consider them once more, we give our focus to the pledge and seal of the forgiveness of sins that is ours when we partake in the Sacrament.

When you come to the Lord’s table and you receive the bread and the wine, your Lord assures you in His Word that you are at the same time receiving His true body and His true blood. We read just moments ago, **Jesus took bread... and gave it to His disciples and said, “Take and eat; this is My body.” Then He took a cup and... 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.** The Apostle Paul also wrote in his letter to the Corinthians, **Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?** (1 Co 10:16). Scripture makes it very clear that there is a communion (a joining together) of the bread and Christ’s body and the wine and Christ’s blood. Therefore, because of the command and promise of our Lord, **Take and eat, this is My body; take and drink, this is My blood,** we know and believe that in, with, and under the bread and wine we are receiving the true body and blood of our Lord in the Sacrament.

As the elements are distributed to you, you hear the Lord’s words, **given for you, and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.** These words remind you again of the purpose for which Christ died for you upon the cross. He gave His body and He poured out His blood for you for the forgiveness of sins. Paul wrote to the Colossians, **God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.** (Col 1:14). In this Holy Supper Jesus brings that redemption to you, giving you His body and His blood together with the promise, **given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.**

But do we always fully appreciate what this means to each and every one of us—to have the forgiveness of sins? Often our failure to fully appreciate forgiveness is the direct result of our failure to fully appreciate the seriousness of our sin and what it does to us and to our world. When we begin to realize the devastating seriousness of sin, then we start to appreciate the forgiveness God offers us.

Sin is our greatest problem. It’s at the bottom of all our troubles. It produces all the ills of the world. It is sin that causes sorrow and tears; it is sin that leads to death and the grave. If there were no sin, there would be no sickness, suffering, or death. If there were no sin, there would be no greed for gain, lust for power, or war for conquest or terror; there would be no crime or delinquency, no prisons or jails or rehab centers. What is behind the problems caused by drunkenness, debauchery, and dishonesty? Sin. What is behind the sting of suspicion, gossip, and slander? Sin.

And worse than all these ills and troubles that sin has brought upon us in this world is the effect that it has on our relationship with God. It separates us from our Creator. It calls down His wrath and displeasure upon us. It makes us His enemies. It blinds us so thoroughly and deadens us so completely in spiritual things that we cannot find our way back to God. And if it remains unforgiven, then God will cast us off forever because of our sin to suffer eternal punishment in the place He prepared for Satan and his angels.

But how many people really recognize and realize the seriousness of sin and its dreadful consequences? Instead, sin is often taken very lightly. Instead of looking upon it as the transgression of God's holy law which deserves punishment, many simply view it as a weakness of human nature that ought to be overlooked. And then the excuses begin to come—the adulterer is only yielding to natural desires to prevent frustration; the murderer is temporarily insane; the thief has a peculiar mental twist; the drunkard is seeking relief from some problem. In every way imaginable, people have grown accustomed to soft-pedaling sin and explaining it away. Because we Christians are living in this environment, the temptation is always present to absorb that kind of thinking. Gradually we no longer get upset over our sin and as a result don't recognize our great need to get rid of it and its guilt. But when the Lord says, **you shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not covet; you shall not take the name of the Lord in vain;** He means it. When we disobey any of the commandments, that is sin. Regarding sin the Lord's Word still stands, **The soul who sins is the one who will die; the wages of sin is death** (Ezk 18:20; Ro 6:23). He who does not repent of his sins, but continues in a life of sinfulness, to that person the Lord finally says, **Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the everlasting fire** (Mt 25:41). We ought to tremble at the thought of that. Our greatest need is to recognize our wretchedness because of sin and then to receive the forgiveness of our sin which the Lord in His grace offers to us.

In the Bible, from the words of Jesus Himself, we learn and believe that we receive as a pledge and seal of our forgiveness, the sacred body and blood which our Lord sacrificed for us on the cross. His body which was scourged and beaten, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross, pierced through with a spear, and gave up its crimson blood to pay for our sins He has given to us. Because He has done this for us, our Lord tells us, **As far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed your transgressions from you** (Ps 103:12). **The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin** (1 Jn 1:7). And where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation.

We want to be sure that we aren't mistaken about where the power to forgive sins comes from in the Lord's Supper. As we participate in the Sacrament this evening, that power to forgive sins does not come from me and it doesn't come from you, it comes from our Almighty Lord and His Word. The same powerful word which Jesus used to heal those who were blind, crippled, and leprous, the same powerful word He used to calm the winds and the waves, the same powerful word He used to restore Lazarus' life and call Him out of the tomb, the same word which He used in the beginning to speak Creation into being, that same word assures us **this is My body and this is My blood, given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.** And where we have God's Word, **do this and I will forgive you your sins and strengthen your faith,** that is sufficient for a Christian. It is the powerful word and gracious promise of God to which we cling.

In the Lord's Supper the Lord our God comes to us in holy communion to serve us. He comes to us individually and forgives our sin. He who could have said, "you sinners deserve nothing but punishment," and therefore allow us to die in our sins, experiencing the judgment and condemnation which is justly ours, instead remains a gracious and compassionate God who wants all people to be saved, who gave His only Son to suffer and die in our place, and who in Holy Communion offers, conveys, and seals to us the forgiveness of our sins. As we then approach the Lord's Table to receive His true body and blood let these words resound in your ears and in your hearts **given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.**

As Jesus comes to us in His Sacrament we are to bear in mind: It is I who have sinned; it is I who by my sins have merited God's wrath and damnation; it is I who need forgiveness, or else I am lost. And in this sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Jesus comes to me. When I come to His table, He through His servant of the Word gives to me personally His body and blood and says to me, "your sins are forgiven."

Satan may attack me. Temptations may come. Sorrow and pain may be my lot. Death itself may even raise its ugly head. But I have no need to fear. Jesus comes to me through the gospel to keep and strengthen me in faith. Jesus gives me His own body and blood as a pledge and seal of my forgiveness, of life, and eternal salvation.

We pray: Lord Jesus, abide with me as I approach your altar confessing my sins and iniquities, seeking Your forgiveness through Your body and blood given and poured out for me. Amen.

**I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless; Ills have no weight and fears no bitterness.  
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory? I triumph still if Thou abide with me.**