

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Back in chapter 9 of St. Luke's Gospel, Jesus has spoken to Elijah and Moses of His exodus.

During this Lenten season, we have watched our Lord walk the path of His exodus
from the Garden of Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed to the cross.

Tomorrow we will retrace these steps to meditate on His holy sabbath,

His rest from all the work of redemption that He accomplished.

But today/tonight we take a step back, and at the same time, a step forward,

all the while being very present here and now, as we meditate on His institution of His holy supper.

As follows in Jesus' name:

And when the hour came, [Jesus] reclined at table, and the apostles with Him. And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood."
(ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; **sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth.** Amen.* (John 17:17)

It was the Passover, the 10th plague on Egypt, that finally forced Pharaoh to let Israel go.

Like the first 3 plagues, this plague would cover the whole land of Egypt, both Egyptians & Israelites.

No one was automatically exempt from this plague of death,

but the Lord had provided a way to be delivered from it — if only they would believe and obey Him,
covering their doors with the blood of the sacrificial victim.

An unblemished, male Passover lamb, one-year-old (that is, in the prime of life),
was to be selected on the 10th day of Nisan (Abib).

Then at twilight of the 14th day, that lamb was to be slaughtered, its blood caught,
and then struck on the doorposts and lintel of the house.

The family would then gather in the house and eat the lamb, with unleavened bread,
and with the bitter herbs and spices.

They were to eat it dressed and in haste, prepared to leave Egypt the next day.

And even before the Lord had accomplished His passover,

He directed His people that they were to keep this feast throughout their generations.

It was a memorial feast.

Every year, they were to celebrate it by eating the lamb

— a reminder of the lamb whose blood was shed,

and of the meal that had strengthened them for the exodus from Egypt.

Every year, they were to celebrate it with the bitter herbs

— a reminder of the bitter slavery they had endured.

Every year, they were to celebrate it with unleavened bread

— a reminder of the haste with which they left.

Every year they were to retell the story of their redemption from the hard service in Egypt Ex.2:24

— a reminder of **God's remembrance of His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob** to bring them into the Promised Land and give them rest.

But it was more than just a reminder of what had happened... in the past;

as we can clearly recognize from the Gospel accounts, it was to point ahead... to Jesus' redemption.

John the Baptist recognized this when he pointed out Jesus

as **"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."** John 1:24

And when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the 10th day of Nisan (better known to us as Palm Sunday),

He was identifying Himself as the chosen Passover Lamb, without blemish, in the prime of life.

The memorial Passover feast was to point them to their redemption from a much harder service,

not merely from difficult manual labor under cruel taskmasters in Egypt,

but the hard service under Satan, bound by sin, and subject to spiritual, temporal, and eternal death.

This task master never relents, never lets go, never allows a moment's peace, until he is forced to.

...

But this particular Passover that Jesus **earnestly desired to eat** with His disciples would be the last one.

This memorial picture of redemption would fade away to make room for the real redemption

as Jesus, the Lamb of God, shed His blood and gave His life for the sins of the world.

While it was yet being celebrated this last time, Jesus instituted a better meal to be had until His return.

In so many ways, the Lord's Supper is like the Passover.

It is a memorial meal; Jesus tells us, **"Do this in remembrance of Me."**

He gives to us what elements are to be had, not lamb, or bitter herbs, but bread and wine.

He gives us certain ceremonies to perform: speak certain words, distribute the blessed elements, and take, eat and drink.

And just as the Passover reminded them of their past redemption and pointed ahead to a future one,

so the Lord's Supper not only reminds us of His redemption accomplished for us on the cross,

but it also points us to our future salvation when we shall indulge at the marriage feast of the Lamb.

There and then we shall partake of our promised rest for all eternity in peace and joy.

...

But God has not forgotten about the here and now.

He knows the troubles you have wandering in this wilderness of sin and death,

which is another reason that He instituted this divine meal.

Jesus earnestly desired to have the Passover with His disciples,

not because it would be His last Passover and He was feeling sentimental,

but because it would be His first Holy Communion with them.

Through this Meal He would continue to commune with them, that is, to be united with them,

even after His death and resurrection.

Through this Meal He would mark them with the blood of His testament as His people.

Through this Meal He would passover them in judgment, giving them forgiveness.

Through this Meal He would strengthen them for the coming trials: that evening/the next day/beyond.

Through this Meal He would remember His covenant with them and give them rest,

and keep them remembering His sacrifice and gifts.
And as St. Paul says, **As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup...
we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.**

...

Can you imagine, on that night, one of those faithful disciples looking aloof,
disinterested in receiving this meal, this gift,
or saying, "Thanks, but no thanks, Jesus. I don't need. I don't want it"?
That would be incomprehensible.

...

Just as emphatically, Jesus says to you, **"I earnestly desire to have this meal with you,"**
which is why He commands us, **"Do this in remembrance of Me."**
He says **"do this"**, not "leave this undone."

When you neglect to come to the Lord's Supper...when you deprive yourself of this meal,
as the catechism (Q.#321) teaches us, you sin against His command
and deprive yourself of His great blessings.

But then, should you come just for fear of sinning against Him?
...coming begrudgingly, not for the promise but because of the threat?
Do you then come as a worthy guest in such a manner?

In such a case, Luther urges us

- to put our hand to our heart to see if it is still beating,
and if so, then remember that the natural flesh is hostile to God,
and we need the Lord's help, His forgiveness, strength, & His presence to cleanse and free us from it.
- Then we should look around us to see if we are still in the world,
and recognize that you will have no lack of sin and trouble.
- And yet again, know that Satan will not give up on you until the day of your death.
He doesn't care whether your faith is squelched from the beginning of life or in the last breath.
And so you will always have him fighting against you.

No one is automatically exempt from the plague of death.

In fact, quite the opposite, the plague is upon us all, but God had provided a way of deliverance.
— if only we would believe and obey Him, being covered with the blood of the sacrificial Victim.

So what are you to do if you have neglected the Lord's Supper?

If you have received it in fear or simply for show before others?

If you have mindlessly received it without the requisite self-examination?

The answer is before you.

Repent of your negligence.

Repent of your lack of watchfulness.

Repent of your lack of faith.

And then recognizing your great need of forgiveness, come to your Lord's Supper of salvation
and receive Him with blessing.

Through this Meal, this feast of remembrance, He continues to commune with you today.

Note that there are no bitter herbs.

The sins burdening your conscience are enough bitterness, and you are be relieved of them.
The bread you eat is truly a participation in the true Lamb of God slain on Calvary.
The wine you drink is a participation in the true blood of God shed for your forgiveness.

Your Lamb desires to give Himself to you over and over again
to mark the door of your mouth with His blood,
passing over you in judgment, forgiving your sins and cleansing your conscience,
strengthening you for the trials ahead of you,
and keeping His covenant to you in remembrance.

Thanks be to God.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria