



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 1, 2010  
Maundy Thursday  
[1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#)  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Jeremiah 31:33-34](#)  
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 116](#)  
Second Lesson: [Hebrews 10:15-25](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 22:7-20](#)

### We Preach Christ Crucified in His Holy Supper

I suppose you are all familiar with the First Martin, Martin Luther, but it's been said that the teachings from the First Martin would have been lost if not for the Second Martin. The Second Martin you might not be as familiar with, that would be Martin Chemnitz. Martin Chemnitz wrote some wonderful theological books. In 1570, there was a smaller book that was published. The title of it was "Concerning the Lord's Supper." I want you to hear the first words that he wrote in this book because they really give us a great insight as to how we should understand the words of God that I just read to you.

He says, "The Son of God commended to his Church the words of institution of the Supper in the form of a last will and testament at a time of high emotion, with the most fervent prayer, and under the most serious circumstances on the night in which he was betrayed. Therefore, these words should be observed with the greatest reverence and piety and in the fear of the Lord by all people, *for they are the words of the testament of the Son of God.*" There is some wonderful insight there that is good for us to take to heart.

Think about it...when you are writing your Last Will and Testament, you use a certain kind of language, don't you? If you sit down with your lawyer to draw up your Last Will and Testament and you say, "I leave to my favorite offspring my coin collection." If you have more than one offspring, there is going to be a fight, isn't there? You haven't been very clear. You haven't spelled it out. If you say, "I leave my humble abode to so and so," and the other heirs say, "Wait a minute. He has a cottage up north. Maybe he was talking about that. That's a lot more humble than the other one." Again, there is going to be a fight, right?

When Jesus was teaching the crowds and there were people that believed in him and there were those that were stubborn in their own self righteousness, that's when he spoke in parables. So those who had ears, those who had the Spirit living in them could hear. But at this point in time, when you are giving your Last Will and Testament and bequeathing to the church of all ages this wonderful gift, this isn't the time to be saying, "The kingdom of God is like a net." This is where you speak clearly, right?

So what does he say? What does he say clearly? "This is my body, given for you, for the forgiveness of sins." That's not the one I just read to you from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, because the Holy Spirit was so concerned that we have these words of his Last Will and Testament that he records it for us in four places, not just in one place. He records it in Matthew, Mark, Luke and [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11](#). But he speaks it clearly, "This is my

body. This is my blood. This is the covenant of my blood. This is for you. This is for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.”

It’s just like the reason we call this day “Maundy Thursday.” The word “Maundy” comes from the Latin “*mandatum*,” from which we get our English word “*mandate*” or “*mandates*” or commands. When Jesus gave the new command on Maundy Thursday, he also didn’t speak in parables, did he? Do you remember what the new command is that he gave on Maundy Thursday? “A new command I give to you” he said. “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (See [John 13:34-35](#).) It’s not exactly a head scratcher on what he was telling us we should be doing...this new command that he gave on the night he was betrayed, on the night they celebrated the Passover, on the night he gave this gift of the Lord’s Supper.

In the same way, the Words of Institution explain to us what is going on. This is no longer about observing a meal once a year that focused on how God delivered the children of Israel from the angel of death. He didn’t say “When you do this, do this in remembrance of me.” He said, “Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death.” That really tells us it isn’t to be a once-a-year observance. It is something he gave to us because he knows who we are and what we are like and he knows how desperately we need to be continually connected to Christ crucified for us. In the Lord’s Supper, we are connected to Christ crucified for us.

The problem that has come over the years is that too many sinful human beings want to switch places with God. They don’t want to sit at his feet and let him do the instructing. They want to instruct God. That’s a temptation that’s inside everyone of us at times, isn’t it? Our sinful nature wants to tell God how he should be doing things and what he should be doing or what he should be saying in various circumstances. In the understanding of these words, “This is my body,” human reason looks at that and says, “It can’t be his body. His body can’t be at once in so many places. His body wasn’t of enough substance to feed all Christians of all time and that every time they come to the Lord’s Supper they receive a piece of his body. It just makes no sense. It’s the same with his blood. There isn’t enough blood in the human’s body” reason says.

Human reason also looks at this and says, “This is distasteful. This is savage. This is barbaric. A God that would demand blood and then, on top of that, that we would eat and drink his body and blood? It’s just distasteful.”

We are sinful human beings. When we say to God, “You get up out of the teacher’s seat and let me sit there and tell you how things actually are...I know this is what you said but here is what you really meant because you didn’t mean what you said,” that’s just foolishness. Isn’t that where we started Lent this year? Isn’t that exactly the kind of questions we asked on Ash Wednesday this year about these paradoxes that we cannot understand, the mysteries of God. How can Jesus be both God and man at the same time, fully God and fully man? How can Mary be a virgin and a mother at the very same time? How can the Triune God be three persons yet one God-head? We talked

about these paradoxes, these mysteries, and how the only way we can really begin to understand them is to see Christ crucified, and then we see that we can't understand them. We simply believe them. So by now we ought to be accustomed to things that we can't explain rationally because our reason has fallen into sin along with every other part of us. To think that we could understand the Holy God or tell the Holy God how he should think and act is just the height of arrogance.

If we sit at his feet and we think about the setting, it's his Last Will and Testament, and we listen carefully to hear what it is that he is giving us, what is he saying that this is so important that "I'm going to stop what I'm doing just hours before I'll be betrayed and be all alone. I'm going to stop what I'm doing just hours before I'll be nailed to the cross because I want to give you this gift, because I know how frail and how weak you are and I know you need a strength that goes beyond you" ...then we ought to just sit up and listen. What we hear is a beautiful proclamation that is all Gospel. Jesus doesn't come as the new Moses and say, "Here is the 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment. You have to go to the Lord's Supper and you have to go often. This is something you are doing for me so that I will love you." That isn't what the Lord's Supper is at all. When we start thinking that way, we are all screwed up in thinking we are doing something to earn God's love. This is all Gospel. Jesus comes to us and says, "I am going to give you, you who are weak and frail, you who are prone to doubts and uncertainties, and you who are prone to accuse me of not loving you, I am going to give you the very body and blood that is the ultimate proof that I love you completely and absolutely. Even when you were my enemies and you could offer me nothing, I gave this body and blood for you."

Then he gives it to us in such a way as the Lutheran Confessions call it, a visible Gospel, so that all of our senses come into play. We see what is going on. We taste, we touch, we smell. We hear the words that say, "This is my body. This is my blood poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." This is the height of grace and Gospel and God's precious gifts. Do we always treat it like it's an incredibly precious gift?

Luther once made the observation that if at the Lord's altar we handed out gold coins instead of wafers and wine, balconies would collapse under all the people that would be packed in them just waiting to get down the steps and get to the front of the church to get that gold. I don't think he's that far off, do you?

We approach wafer and wine as though that's all it were. "Don't need it. Did it recently. I'll do it soon. I don't need it now." Do you think if I was handing out \$100 gold coins you would honestly say, "I'll get one later. I don't need it now." So do our actions say that we recognize what a precious gift this is, or as sinful human beings do we simply at times take it for granted? Of course we do. We're sinful.

This is what makes it so amazing. Our God says to us, "This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, poured out for you. I know you are going to neglect it at times. I know you won't always appreciate it fully, but I know there will be those times when you are cowering in fear that you might lose the precious gift of your faith and you'll be longing and desiring this personalized covenant of forgiveness, my testament that I have taken

away your sins. So I'm giving it to you because I love you and I want you to always know that." This is what makes God's love so amazing.

He gives us this love in this tangible way and I believe it is directly connected to the new command that he gave on Maundy Thursday, so that we love one another. If you look at our lives and look around us and look at the times and the days, there isn't just a lack of love out there. There's a lack of love right here, right around us.

In the Lord's Supper, he gives us the strength to lift our eyes beyond the here and now to eternity. He touches us with eternal love. In view of eternity, can't we disagree with someone and still love them? Isn't that a possibility that we, who have the Spirit living in us, can we disagree without someone else, about something where God hasn't spoken, and still love them as our brothers in Christ or as someone who Christ died for? I don't want to hate them over something that in the scheme of eternity is not all that important. Windmills will come and go, or they won't come and go, but how we treat each other will remain, won't it? Do you think maybe the Lord gave us the Lord's Supper so that we would have the strength to love one another when our sinful nature is screaming "hate that person."

It's an incredible gift God has given us. It has the opportunity to give us incredible strength so that we can carry out the new command that we have been called to in Christ.