



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 5, 2012  
Maundy Thursday  
Sermon Text: [Exodus 24:3-11](#)  
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](#)

### A Meal For The Wounded

Do you think they realized, do you think they had a clue about what they were saying? “We will do everything the Lord has said. We will obey.” That’s a mouthful that they were pledging themselves to, right? “We will do everything the Lord has said. We will obey.” You don’t have to think about everything the Lord has said. All you have to do is look at how Jesus summed up all of God’s commands. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” ([Deuteronomy 6:5.](#)) “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ([Leviticus 19:18.](#)) That’s a summary of what they were pledging themselves to do.

Have you ever tried it? Have you ever committed yourself to saying “That’s it. From now on, God is the most important thing in my life. My every thought, my every priority is going to be in line with God. My greatest fear is going to be that I do something that disappoints my God.” Have you ever committed yourself to that? Let alone, love your neighbor as yourself?

That’s what they were agreeing to. Whether you agree to it or not, that’s what your God demands of you. He doesn’t suggest it. He demands it. That’s what he says you need to do to be in his heaven. “Do this and you will live” Jesus once said. ([Luke 10:28.](#))

That’s a problem because I suppose you and I are going to screw up just as quick as the Israelites did. We will obey. We will do everything the Lord has said. It’s pretty straightforward and pretty clear to understand what they were committing themselves to. Yet before they got out of wandering in the wilderness, love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind? They complained about the food. They complained about the lack of water. They complained about the leader. They grumbled over and over and said, “We would have been better off just being slaves back in Egypt and being dead.” “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Really?

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” Remember what happened to Moses when they were wandering in the wilderness? They loved their neighbor as themselves so well that he had to listen to their disputes against each other all day long, until his father-in-law said “Hey! Knock it off! You’re going to kill yourself doing this. Find some other guys. Train them to listen to some of the other stuff because you can’t do this all day every day. There’s just too many disputes. Too much lack of loving your neighbor as yourself and too much loving yourself and only yourself and yourself above anything except

yourself.” (See [Exodus 18](#).) That was the reality for those Israelites. God knew it when he made the covenant with them.

That’s why he also, at the end of the covenant, before they had the covenant meal, which was a way they ratified agreements...they would have a meal together...before that, he brought before their eyes a very vivid image above the only thing that really makes you acceptable to stand before God. It’s not your decision. It’s not your efforts. It’s not how good you are, because you aren’t that good. Neither were they. So he had the people sacrifice the bulls to get ready for the fellowship offering and what they would eat. He took some of the blood. Put half of it in a bowl. Then he took it and sprinkled it on the altar. Blood pays for sin is the picture.

Then he read the Book of the Covenant. They agreed to it again. And almost to say “you’re never going to do it,” he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people. Blood covers sin.

Then the blood-covered people, Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel go up into the presence of God. Because they are covered by the blood of the covenant, they are not struck down dead, even though they should have been. They should have ceased breathing the instant they saw the glory of God, as sinful human beings. Covered by the blood, they went in and saw something they were just struggling to describe. Sapphire, clear as the sky, and that’s where God was sitting. They ate and they drank with him. It’s amazing, isn’t it?

Despite all their words, despite all their foolish trust in themselves, God covered them in blood, and they lived. They didn’t keep their end of the covenant, yet they lived because of God and his grace. They lived because they were under the blood, and under that blood, God’s presence came to them and they lived.

On Maundy Thursday, after all this time of Lent, we are very aware that we have not kept that covenant of the Law. We’ve been forced to look at ourselves honestly during the Midweek Lenten services to see how the wounds that killed Jesus are the wounds we inflicted. We committed ourselves 40 days ago to a struggle against sin and the disciplines of Lent. I’m certain we all failed miserably. As sinners, we didn’t do what we intended to do. We have not loved God with all our heart. We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. Everything that God said he expects of us we have not done.

Yet we come here this evening, like Israel of old, the failures that we are, we too are covered by blood. But this time it’s different blood. It’s the blood of the New Covenant. We have a covenant meal that we enjoy. This covenant meal is a little different. It’s not the blood of a sacrifice of an animal. It’s the blood of the sacrifice of the Son of God who loved perfectly. He is the epitome of the ultimate expression of love. He loved God at every moment of every instant he was alive. He loved his neighbor, not just as himself but more than himself. He left heaven for his neighbor. He lived in their place. He died in their place. He had his blood, the blood that we receive this evening, fall off of him when he was on the cross and soak the ground at the base of the cross.

That is love! Perfect love! Unequivocal love. Unconditional love. For you and me it's most certainly undeserved love.

It's not the Law that condemned Jesus. He was sinless. It's love that led him to take the condemnation our sins deserve. It was love that kept him on that cross. It was love that led him to give his disciples and us this covenant meal that we enjoy this evening. "This is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." ([Matthew 26:28.](#))

We come to Maundy Thursday. The word "Maundy" is a word that comes from the word for command. Jesus gives us a new command on Maundy Thursday and emphasized that new command. That new command was pretty straightforward. Love one another. Then because he knows what thickheaded sinners you and I are and everyone else in the world, he repeats himself over and over and over. Did you ever notice that when you read this? "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." ([John 13:34-35.](#)) Not love one another when it's advantageous for you, but love as Christ loved. "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." That puts the interest of the other person ahead of your own and looks at people as Jesus looks at them. Not as an annoyance. Not as an irritation. Not as someone you tolerate. Not love that's there when you say "Oh hi, how have you been?" while you are trying to figure out their name because you don't know who they are. Not that kind of love, that false love that we maybe put on at times as we talk with each other. An abiding genuine deep love that comes from the very essence of our being. A love that puts the other person's interest far ahead of our own. That's what he has called us to do.

Just like the Israelites, we are going to take a step and say "We will do it. We will obey." And we are going to take one step away and we will trip and fall, because we are sinners. That's why this covenant meal where that love incarnate, that love that became flesh, the love that was crucified, the love that rose again, the love that ascended to heaven, the love that is coming back again on the Last Day comes to us in a way unlike any other while we are on this side of heaven. We receive his very body and blood. It's there in, with and under the bread and the wine. It comes to us and it forgives us. It empowers us to love as he has loved us. And it moves us to want to. This is a powerful meal we are enjoying this evening, this covenant meal, because it connects us to the power that our God has for us...forgiveness and the love that passes all understanding. It's a love that empowers us and a love that makes us, wounded sinners, whole again.