

Devotion on Holy Week (Second Day - Monday before Easter) - 14 April 2014, Anno Domini (Proclaiming the Acceptable Year of the Lord)



Take, eat: this is my body

And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. (Mark 14:18-25)

The Great and Eternal Passover

Do you keep Passover, or do you consider that to be an old celebration reserved for the Jews only? Would you be surprised to know that we do, indeed, keep the Passover – not just at Easter, but each day of our salvation in Christ? The greatest observable example of keeping Passover is the observance of the Lord's Supper at appointed times in the Church. The word, Easter, appears only once in Holy Scripture in Acts 12:4. It is translated from the Greek word, **pavsca Pascha**, which means Passover. So we observe, formally, the Feast of Passover at Easter. The ancient practice of blood sacrifices of lambs in the Temple at Passover was a foreshadowing of that consummation of full sacrifice the Passover Lamb – Jesus Christ.

His death on the cross occurred at the 9th hour (3 PM) – the very moment of the sacrificing of the Passover Lamb in the Temple. This points out to us that Jesus was the realization of the desire of ages as the promised salvation of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ has become our Passover, and it is that Passover meal which is symbolized in our Holy Communion. The Wine represents His Blood shed for us, and the unleavened bread symbolizes His Body broken for us. Leaven represents sin and false doctrine, but Christ is pure and Holy; therefore the symbol we use should match that which is being symbolized.

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are

unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Cor 5:7-8)

What is the nature of that bread which nourishes the devout Christian? That Bread is Jesus Christ as revealed to us in His Word. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* (John 1:1) That Word is Christ, and Christ is our Bread! *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”* (John 6:32-35)

Have you ever had a gnawing hunger, or a ravening thirst? Unless one is hungry, he has no need of bread; and unless a person is thirsty, he has no need of the wine of the Cup of the Lord. The scribes, Pharisees, and the chief rulers of Israel had no hunger or thirst. They were “full of themselves” in pride and self-satisfaction. But those who come to Christ are drawn by a hunger and a thirst that cannot be satisfied in any other way but by Him. The woman of ill repute who came thirsting for the water at the bottom of the pit (called Jacob’s Well) at the noon day hour was not on a pleasure stroll. She needed water to satisfy her thirst. But she found a source of water from the Fountain of Life that overflows continually and bountifully in the heart that knows Christ. The disciples went for bread, but Christ had *“Bread of which they knew not.”* That Bread would be increased by the addition of one soul, and then many others from her village of Sychar who believed the woman’s report. The Body of Christ is also represented in the Bread. We in the Church thrive on His Word and cannot live without it. There are many puny Christians today whose abstention from the Bread of Life (God’s pure and Holy Word) has rendered them deformed and weak. When the Word is watered down by modern textual critics and their deformed bibles, those who eat of that bread are also consuming the impure leaven that man has added. These corrupt bibles feed the cancers of heresy and apostasy that result therefrom.

Today, we have read in the prescribed text (Mark 14) how Jesus was anointed for His burial by the Maid of Bethany (Mary). John 12:3 confirms that it was that Mary of Bethany. We also learned that Christ sat at meat with His disciples and pointed out the one who would betray Him. He observed Passover by identifying Himself as the Bread and wine of the Passover which was symbolized in old Egypt by the sacrifice of a spotless lamb whose blood was smeared across the lintels and up and down the doorpost of the children of Israel. Being found under that blood Covenant, the children of the house were spared by the Angel of Death as that mighty Angel hovered over the Land of Egypt.

We observe that Christ both ate and served the Passover meal. While it is true that the treasonous Judas sat at meat with the Lord that night, his communion was not with Christ but with the enemies of our Lord: *“And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.”* (Luke 22:3-6) There are many who take the Bread of Communion at the Table of the Lord, yet go without a Communion with Christ. To do so unworthily brings a stern judgment. If all hearts are centered in Christ, and all minds are clothed in the Mind of Christ, all will be of one Mind and of the single Communion of our Lord.

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer has said, "The Cup we take is One Cup of the Lord. The Bread of which we partake is the same Bread of Heaven which is the Body of Christ. That One Bread is made of thousands of grains of wheat that are crushed together to make one Bread. How our Christian brethren are crushed and pounded down is very much like that healthful Bread that feeds a hungry multitude." Jesus was like that seed of grain that was planted in the earth and sprang up to untold numbers of fruit. ***"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."*** (John 12:24-25) We must also be like that grain of seed. ***"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."*** (1 Cor 10:16-17)

At such a somber hour that followed the Lord's Supper, our Lord did not omit the singing of hymns at the close of His Passover. ***"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."*** (Mark 14:26) He then went into dark Gethsemane to pray. How inextricably is the singing of hymns and prayer united together in the praise and worship of our Lord? It was most likely a Psalm that was sung since light and frivolous music would have been an irreverence to both our Lord and the Father.

One of the foremost duties of the Church is to watch and pray. We cannot watch unless we know what God has warned us of in Holy Writ. We cannot pray without knowing the Mind of God as revealed in Scripture. If we put on the whole armor of God, we shall stand against the wavering lines of our mortal foe. When Jesus went more deeply into the Garden to pray, he took His three disciples whom He had called so many months ago from the shores of peaceful Galilee. He asked them to watch and pray so as to be armed against the temptations of the evil one. ***"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."*** (Mark 14:38)

One of the great benefits of sincere prayer is that it brings into our circumstances the protection of God. But these three who loved Jesus could not even bear watching and praying with him in the night of His agony. Christ returned three times and found them sleeping. How lonely our Lord must have felt at the sight. How terrible is our offense in failing to watch and pray today in the Churches of America and around the world. There must have been a stinging memory of these three failures to pray when Peter later reflected on his three denials of our Lord outside the chambers of the High Priest the night of Jesus' betrayal. Peter wept bitterly at the third crowing of the rooster. He endured three days of absolute grief and anguish for the three days that our Lord was in the Tomb. The Lord would later ask Peter THREE TIMES if he loved Him.

So begins the Holy week of our observance and memorial of the Lord's Passion and Sacrifice. Our Passover is being prepared. Are you watching and praying, my friend?