

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – Mark 14:12-26 – St. John’s – Maundy Thursday – 4/1/2021

Think about the importance that meals play in your life.<sup>1</sup> God sustains you physically with meals. When you are hungry you look forward to your next meal. And when you eat your hunger is satisfied. With meals God sustains us physically, but the importance of meals goes way beyond that. Eating meals together is important quality time for families. Many holidays involve a meal. For example, it’s hard to picture Thanksgiving without a meal. Meals are often part of a celebration. For example, many wedding ceremonies are followed by a reception where there is often a dinner. Meals play an important part in our lives. It is not surprising then that God attaches his Word and promise to a special meal, the Lord’s Supper.

You see Jesus is the Bread of Life. He is the one who gives us life and sustains us spiritually. And what Jesus uses to sustain us spiritually is the Gospel, the Good News of what he has done for us. The Good News is the means of grace. The Good News is the means by which Jesus sustains us spiritually. Now that good news takes three forms. Jesus sustains us through the word that is preached or read in the Bible. Jesus sustains us through his promise connected to water in baptism. And Jesus sustains us through his promise connected to a special meal, the Lord’s Supper.

Tonight I would like us to

**See God’s Promise Connected to the Lord’s Supper.**

- I. **This promise sustains you.**
- II. **This promise is reason to celebrate.**

First, see God’s promise connected to the Lord’s Supper. This promise sustains you. One reason meals are important to us is that God uses them to sustain us physically. My wife and I have observed that at our house with 4 small children, we kind of live from meal to meal. It is amazing to us that after an hour after a really big breakfast, our kids will say, “I’m hungry.” And then we have to decide, do we give them a snack or see if we can make until lunch and the same thing happens between lunch and dinner. We live from meal to meal because meals sustain us. God sustains us spiritually when we hear his promise. And in the Lord’s Supper God promise is connected to a meal.

God’s Old Testament people were sustained by God’s promises too, God’s promises of a Savior. And one of the places where God’s promise of a Savior came out very clearly was in the Passover meal. The meal that Jesus was celebrating with his disciples that night was a Passover meal. How did God’s promise of a Savior come out in the Passover meal? Well, the Passover was remembrance of when God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt. And every time God’s Old Testament people ate the Passover they could remember that God had promised to deliver them from a greater slavery, the slavery to sin.

Certainly the Passover lamb pointed forward to the promise of a Savior. On the first Passover, God had repeatedly sent Moses to Pharaoh to say, “Let my people go.” But Pharaoh had refused each time. God sent terrible plagues on the Egyptians and Pharaoh still refused. And so God said, “I’m going to send one more plague, and Pharaoh is going to let the people go.” This was a terrible plague. The LORD went through Egypt that night and killed every firstborn of the Egyptians. But God told the Israelites, “Take a

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<sup>1</sup> I owe these insights about meals to some classes I took at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, taught by Dr. Joshua Jipp. I also owe these insights to others scholars such as Luke Timothy Johnson.

lamb and sacrifice it. And put the blood of the lamb on the doorframes of your houses. And when I go through Egypt I will see the blood and pass over your door.” And so the Israelites were spared from that final plague by the blood of the lamb.

And that certainly points forward to Jesus. We deserve to have God’s destruction and judgment come down on us. But God sees the blood of the lamb and passes over us. In 1 Corinthians Paul says that “Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed.” (1 Corinthians 5:7)

In the Passover meal God sustained his people by a promise of things to come. In the Lord’s Supper, Jesus sustains us with the promise of things already accomplished. Our passage says, **“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take it; this is my body.’” (Mark 14:22)**<sup>2</sup> By his almighty power as the Son of God, Jesus does something miraculous in the Lord’s Supper. In a supernatural way that goes beyond our understanding, Jesus gives us his own body in, with and under the bread. In the Lord’s Supper Jesus gives us the very price of our salvation. He gives us his body, which was given for us on the cross. Because of our sins we deserve condemnation and hell, but Jesus gave his body in our place so that we could have heaven.

**“Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,’ he said to them” (Mark 14:23-24).** A covenant is an agreement. In Jeremiah God said that he was going to make a new covenant with his people, a covenant in which he would forgive his people’s sins and remember their sins no more. Every time you take the Lord’s Supper, remember God’s promise: Because of Jesus’ blood shed for you, God remembers your sins no more.

In the Lord’s Supper Jesus gives us his blood in, with, and under the wine. That blood was poured out for you, for your forgiveness. When you are bothered by your sins, remember Jesus’ promise, here attached to the Lord’s Supper.

This promise sustains you. And this promise is reason to celebrate. Now celebration might not seem to be the right word for tonight because when Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples he was about to be betrayed and crucified. That was a very sad and somber thing. I don’t want to take away from that. But even as Jesus ate that last meal with his disciples, he looked forward to his triumph.

He said, **“Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25).** This implies his resurrection because even though he is going to die, Jesus is looking ahead to a time when he is going to drink from the fruit of the vine anew in the kingdom of God. Jesus died but he rose from the dead. We have a living Savior who gives us his true body and blood in the Lord’s Supper for the forgiveness of our sins. And through faith in his promise of forgiveness, we also will be at the feat in the Kingdom of God.

So even though Maundy Thursday is a solemn night, it is also a time to celebrate as we remember what Jesus has done for us. How do we celebrate what Jesus has done for us? The first way we celebrate what Jesus has done for us is by receiving his promise in faith. In the Lord’s Supper Jesus says, “This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, poured out for you, for your forgiveness.” Receive this in faith. Let it give you peace and joy.

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<sup>2</sup> Scripture quotations in this sermon are taken from the NIV.

Another way we can celebrate on this Maundy Thursday is by letting that peace permeate our whole lives so that it drives out the leaven of sin. Our passage says that it was **“the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread” (Mark 14:12)**. This is why the bread in the Lord’s Supper is more like a cracker rather than a fluffy loaf, because the bread was unleavened. During the Festival of Unleavened Bread, God told the Israelites to get all the leaven out of their houses.

Leaven came to be used a picture for sin and how we want to get all sin out of our lives. The Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, **“Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8).**<sup>3</sup> Paul told the Corinthians that before they take the Lord’s Supper they should examine themselves (11:28). We should examine our lives to see where we have sinned. We should repent of our sins. That means be sorry for them and desire to stop them. And then we receive Jesus’ promise of forgiveness in the Lord’s Supper and then we seek to celebrate that forgiveness and say thank you for that forgiveness by turning away from sin in our lives.

Meals play an important part in our lives. Let this meal comfort you with God’s promise. Let it inspire you to live a new life, and let it point you forward to the feast in heaven. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> I owe this insight to Professor Joel Fredrich in a class on 1 Corinthians.