

Maundy Thursday
April 1, 2021

We are in a constant tug-of-war between what we think of ourselves and what the Lord will make of us. Yet, we here, acknowledge the reality of and the need for a Savior. But, do we resist being saved? On this day, we are called to see a bigger picture of what the Lord has done which will help us better understand what He is doing.

Out of Zion, He has called us to Zion. We are born children of a fallen humanity and reborn in the hope of His promise to be children of God. The story unfolds before us.

Abraham was called and accepted what the Lord had done. He trusted the Lord above all things. But his children fell away and trusted in what they could see and understand. Over a period of time, they ended up being slaves in a foreign land. God called them out of their bondage through His servant, Moses.

What is the message of the Passover? This night is dedicated to helping us in connecting the dots of Scripture and better understanding the full story of our salvation. We are born in fallen humanity and through grace, we are given the power to become children of God. The tug-of-war that plagues us also serves as the grounds of the character building and strengthening of faith which the Lord gives us through grace. But each day, we need help.

The Israelites really did not understand what the Lord was doing. Do we? He allowed them to slip into slavery. But did they not have their part in this? The farther they moved away from the Lord, the more difficult the slavery that incarcerated them. We too know this, for we travel down a path away from the Lord and wonder how we got so far removed from Him. It is the plague of this age. We end up slaves of whatever enslaves us. But our Lord always gives a way of escape. This escape is not to move back into freedom in order to continue to practice what enslaved us, but to begin again.

Through this past year, we have dealt with a pandemic. The world would have us be afraid. Our Lord instructs us to trust Him above all things. We are neither free to ignore the world, nor are we to come to the place of a carefree attitude, but have been called to be shrewd, yet remain innocent. In one sense, we are at a place in history where we have the opportunity to have the light of Christ shine through us. I said through, not on. You see, if the light shines on us, it will create a shadow. If it shines through us, it will cause the unbelieving to marvel.

On that night, there were specific instructions given to a people who did not understand what the Lord was doing. Dare we say that we know what the Lord is doing? Move to the place where, by faith, you receive what the Lord is doing.

“Take a lamb, without spot or blemish, and sacrifice it.” “Behold the Lamb of God (Anus Dei) who takes away the sin of the world.” Consume it all, leave nothing, and be prepared to move. Has not this instruction continued? Yes, it has. Too often, we cling to this world. Our Lord tells us to prepare for a journey.

The journey of this life is a wandering in the wilderness. We leave behind the world into which we were born in order to travel to a promised land that we have never seen. How often do we ignore the messages of those, like Caleb and Joshua, who tell us that we can go on into the promised land? Instead, we continue wandering. In this life, the promised land is a place of peace, but the church has spent far too much time and energy trying to be what it can never be, for these things belong to the Lord. We have a Lord and Master and He must be the One who leads. He will.

For the Israelites, along the way, the Lord gave them the Ten Commandments. Not looking inward, but outward, even the most fervent denier of Christ agrees with the law. Speaking to another, we do realize that “you are not God.” We continue with realizing that worshipping things is not the truth. We do need rest. We are to honor people in positions of authority. Being decadent is not the meaning of live. We are not to take the life of another as if we were God. The word here is murder, not kill, lest soldiers believe that in doing their job they take on some guilt. Be honest and content with what you have. Do not connive to take from another. Although we do these things sometimes, we certainly agree that another should not do this to us. Our Lord spelled this out, but, in our hearts, we all know these things.

We are born with an attitude that we are the center. The center is God. We need to shift thinking so that our center is the Lord. That’s the struggle for us as we wander the wilderness of this life. We need all the help we can get. Jesus has come to not only give us help, but to give us the ability we need to do these things.

As Jesus sat down with His disciples for the Passover, He was doing much more than simply remembering what God did for the Israelites. First, He washed the disciples feet. He became the lowest of the low servants. The Palestinian tradition says that Jesus gave the seat of honor to Judas that night, giving him one last chance to repent. Peter was indignant and you see it in what he did that night, beginning with the washing of the feet and his arguing with Jesus. Jesus is telling us that He must be the One who does what needs to be done. We partake, but He must do it. Why do we baptize? Because Jesus told us to do it. Why do we commune? Because Jesus told us to do it.

Jesus took the Afi Khomen, the best portion, that which was hidden, unleavened bread (that is, without the pollution of the world) and broke it. His body was broken for us on the cross. What sin does to us, He took upon Himself. In this world, we are broken in body and in spirit. Our spirit is the thing that is repaired in this life (with, I suspect, more to come in the next). But our bodies continue the breaking process. This is why the life to come holds so much promise, for the word tells us we shall receive new bodies that are not subject to decay. Friends, we are not yet what we shall be. Jesus instructs us to take it all in. Take His body. Take the broken killed body, for in that death, you die. Take the body that shall be resurrected and let it be yours. It is bread, quite literally. It is His body, quite literally. This is what He said. Yes, I too am puzzled by this, but then how many things do I do without understanding them? More than some temporary elixir that we need from time to time, this is grace acting in and through us.

Jesus took the cup of promise, the cup of redemption, praised the Father with thanks and gave it to His disciples instructing them to take in His life. Unless we have the life of Christ in us, it means nothing. This again, is not about some elixir, but about the light of Christ shining in and through us at all times. In our secret places as well as in those places in public where we are seen. “Do this and remember.”

These things are not just remembering that night, be it when death passed over the first born, or that night in the upper room with the disciples, but also, remembering what our Lord is doing through the salvation we have received in faith. It is remembering that you are a child of God in the making, redeemed by the One who body was broken on the cross for You. It is remembering all of His promises and living in the hope He gives You.

Come to the upper room, hear the truth of the Lord and believe. Follow Him and He will fill you. Follow Him and the author of all life will make of You what He will, a child of the heavenly Father. Come to the dark garden of this world and pray with our Lord. Amen.