

Maundy Thursday
St. John 13:1-15
March 29th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Knew Who Would Betray Him

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

These last three days of Lent—Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, commonly called the Tri Duum—each have a special emphasis. Tomorrow, Good Friday, the focus is obviously on the suffering of our Lord on the tree of the holy cross; His guiltless payment for our sins. The focus on Holy Saturday, at least in the morning, is the burial of our Lord + Jesus Christ, and the actions of the chief priests to seal the tomb and place guards over it to watch so that no one can break *into* the tomb. They ignore the fact that our Lord + Jesus breaks *out* of the tomb. So then, what is the emphasis today on Maundy Thursday? One would think because we place an emphasis on the Lord's Supper that that would be the focus. However, the real focus of Maundy Thursday is the betrayal and arrest of our Lord. Those are the events that happen this night in our Lord's and His Apostles' lives.

Our Lord + Jesus is betrayed by His own disciple; by Judas Iscariot. However, just as the Evangelist St. John records, our Lord knew who would betray Him. What does that really mean? It means that our Lord + Jesus is in complete control of the situation. These events are not happening by chance. These are not events to which our Lord has to react. What this means is that our Lord is directing the events of this night. Our Lord is in complete control.

Our Lord could have easily taken Judas aside and rebuked him for his agreeing for thirty pieces of silver. Just like when He pulled St. Peter aside when he rebuked our Lord for wanting to go to Jerusalem and His death. He knew who was going to betray Him. He could have said something. But, He did not. For, this is what is supposed to happen.

There is some debate among theologians whether Judas was actually present when our Lord first offered His Body and Blood in, with and under bread and wine, and therefore instituted for our use the Lord's Supper. Those who say Judas was not there say so because they believe that our Lord would not permit someone to the table who was not in fellowship with Him. But, this is not a fellowship issue. This is a sin issue. The sin of Judas is no greater than any of the other disciples, who all forsook Him and fled. It is certainly no greater of a sin than St. Peter's denial of knowing our Lord + Jesus three times, before the cock crowed. Judas is allowed to commune with the other disciples, because even though He betrays the Lord, there is still an opportunity for him to repent. Just like St. Peter repented and clung to the Lord's grace and mercy in faith.

That Judas communed with the other disciples shows us another truth: that this meal is for sinners who desire forgiveness and want to amend their sinful lives.

It is a meal which offers forgiveness of sins, to all those who believe on the Lord + Jesus Christ. St. Peter ate this meal, he fell into the sin of denying our Lord, but in faith He clung to our Lord's mercy. All the other disciples forsook Him as well, but other than Judas, all returned to our Lord in faith. All of the eleven end up in the upper room after His resurrection waiting confirmation that it is the truth. So then, this meal of remembrance of our Lord's Passion is for sinners. It is for us, who daily sin much, and need to be forgiven of our sins by the Lord + Jesus Himself.

But, Judas' actions also teach us another thing about this meal: that unbelievers eat it to their damnation.

One of the questions I get asked a lot around this time of the year is, "What is the difference between St. Peter and Judas Iscariot?" The answer is a simple one: faith. St. Peter possessed faith, while Judas Iscariot, fueled by the lies of the devil, fell into unbelief and despair, which led to him to go and hang himself.

The actions of Judas should stand as a stark warning to us. For, there are times when the lies of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh shout louder at us. And at these times we are susceptible to the same doubt and despair that Judas endured. It could be from our sins, or from the consequences of sin in this world, as we experience pain and loss in this life of tears. We need to be on guard against falling into despair during these times. When the devil, the world and our sinful flesh rail against us, we need to cling more desperately to our Lord and His cross—His mercy seat—that wins forgiveness for us in faith.

When St. Peter realized that what the Lord had predicted came true we are told two things: one, he went out and wept bitterly. And two, we are told that he remembered the word of the Lord. Certainly St. Peter remembers the prediction of the Lord that he would deny the Lord three times before the cock crowed. But, this is not the only thing that the Lord has to say to him, or the other Apostles, on this night.

In our Gospel from the thirteenth chapter of the Evangelist St. John we are told that our Lord + Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. This was done to remind them of baptism; to remind them that they were washed clean and forgiven through baptism. Our Lord began the night with this foot washing. And, throughout the night, our Lord is constantly reminding them that everything He does is for their forgiveness. This is how He also ends the night when He gives them to eat and drink of His Body and Blood in bread and wine and therefore institutes the Lord's Supper. He explicitly tells them (and we hear these words again and again whenever the bread and wine are consecrated) that this meal is for the forgiveness of sins. This meal is given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

St. Peter certainly remember the prediction of the Lord + Jesus that he would deny our Lord, but I believe it is safe to say that at some point, he also remembered the words of forgiveness that our Lord began and ended this night before His betrayal, arrest and trial.

We too, whenever we sin, betray our Lord. He knew that His creation would betray Him; would break His commandment. We have all betrayed our Lord with our doubt and sin. However, our Lord still has the promise of forgiveness on His lips. He is always ready to give to us absolution; to forgive us of our sins. Just like St. Peter, we can hear those words of forgiveness—that promise—and cling once again to our Lord and His mercy seat. But, even more than St. Peter, we can see the cross as the means of our salvation and redemption. For St. Peter it meant only death. For us it means forgiveness

of sins, eternal life and salvation have been won for us and are given out to us through the means of grace—through Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper.

For Judas Iscariot it meant that he betrayed innocent blood. It meant the death of hope. He did not listen to or hear the words of the Lord + Jesus. He forgot that our Lord also offered forgiveness to him. He was at the foot washing and heard the words that he could be clean, even though he was not at that moment, because the Lord desired to wash away the sins of His disciples, including Judas', regardless of whether he was at the institution of the Lord's Supper or not. However, even though the promise was spoken, he did not listen to it, and so he condemned himself.

This is why it is important for us to keep our ears open to the Word of the Lord, so that we might hear His promises to us, and cling to Him in faith, and receive His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. Especially when the pain and sorrow of this life is squawking at us to despair.

The people of the Early Church knew this all too well. That is why these three days—the Tri Duum—were for early Christians days of vigil; watching and praying and reflecting upon our Lord's Passion and redemption of us. From this service until the main service on Easter they would be in church. They did not go home to sleep. They just kept vigil at the church mixed in with times of worship. They did this because they did not want to miss hearing any of the Word of God. They wanted to hear the story again of our Lord's redemption and what He endured for them and us. But, they also wanted to walk in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior as He was led to His crucifixion, so that they could hear about their forgiveness.

Let us also walk in the footsteps of our Lord. Let us hear the story of our redemption. Let us hear how forgiveness, life and salvation were won for us. Our Lord endured much on this night. He was betrayed, He was arrested, and He was put on trial. All this leads to His death and burial. But it also leads to His resurrection, which confirms that the Father accepted the sacrifice of His Son for all of us. Thanks be to God! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo gloria!