

Matthew 26:17-30

17 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

18 He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'"

19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. 20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21 And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."

22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"

23 Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. **28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.** 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

INTRO - My brothers and sisters in Christ, and especially tonight the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Confirmation Class, almost 6 years ago our country suffered a terrorist attack that took thousands of lives, destroyed a major commercial center, attacked the center of military operations, planning and strategy, and caused 4 airplane crashes, killing hundreds of more people. What should a country do when attacked? What would you do if you were President? A normal response is to protect one's citizens and defend the country. So our President sent our military to Afghanistan where the attackers were hiding, and then to Iraq where our intelligence said there was support for the attackers. Now, boys and girls, I know that in school you hear a lot of different ideas about whether or not this was the right thing to do. I personally have strong opinions, but I'm not going to share them from the pulpit. But, I want you to realize how difficult these decisions were. Do you allow people to be killed in your own country, or do you send your military away, knowing more will be killed overseas? That is a tough decision, a tough action to take. And, if the source of attacks is a place in the world where there has been fighting and disagreement for 4000 years, how does a country go about conducting it's business. These are hard decisions, tough actions to take, with real consequences.

I. People of God, we need to know and admit that life is hard,

A. We may face the difficulty of life with rational decisions.

1. Decisions like where to live, what kind of job to take, how to invest money.
2. You know as well as I do that these situations don't always have easy answers, or right answers.

B. We may face difficulty in personal relationships.

1. How do I share my concern with a friend or family member?
2. How do I help someone struggling with life?
3. How best do I raise my children?
4. These are tough situations that don't always have easy answers, or right answers.

C. We may face situations that are difficult emotionally.

1. What do I do when I face, or a friend faces a horrible illness?
2. How do we face death, ours, or that of a loved one?
3. These are tough situations that don't always have easy answers, or right answers.

D. The difficulties life throws our way are often beyond our wisdom, beyond our strength, beyond our abilities.

1. If we are honest about life, if in honesty we face life the way it really is, we all need help!
2. We need companionship, encouragement, sympathy, guidance. . . we need help.

II. Worse yet, God tells us that life's problems and pain are caused by our sin, and the sin of the people in the world around us.

A. God tells us in the Scripture that before people sinned, there was no pain, no death, no hatred.

B. And, this sin affects all of us.

1. We all struggle with our fleshly desires, our selfishness and pride, our greed and our self importance.
2. We often lose that struggle.
3. The result of our sin is not only pain and trouble in this life, but death, and ultimately hell because of rebellion against God.

- C. If you go to a mechanic, you want to know what is wrong with your car before he starts working. Before we deal with the troubles of life, it is important to know what God says about our life, to know the horrible truth of the situation in our world, a truth we often try to deny.
- D. My brothers and sisters in Christ, we not only need help for our troubles, we need help for our sins.

III. So, I want you to know that when Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, He is giving us exactly what we need.

- A. Jesus is the all powerful Son of God, and God Himself who can help people in trouble.
1. Jesus gave His disciples the bread and said in tonight's Gospel, '**This is my body.**'
  2. He gave His disciples the cup and said in tonight's Gospel, '**This is my blood.**'
  3. For people who need help, Jesus tells us tonight, '*I am with you. I give you myself to walk beside you, to guide you, to love you.*'
- B. And, for sinners, Jesus has just what we need.
1. He says in tonight's Gospel, '**This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**
  2. For people who struggle with their sins, Jesus gives us forgiveness by His dying and rising, through this Sacrament.
  3. For people who struggle with their sins, Jesus assures us of His love, and helps us with His presence to face those sins in this life.
- C. For people who face pain and trouble, sin and failure, death, and judgement, Jesus help and gives forgiveness and life, He gives just what we need!

VI. Seventh Graders, you are nearing adult hood. It is important that you know the truth about life.

- A. Life can seem hard now.
1. You have hard classes, disagreements with your friends, troubles at home. You may worry about making a team, or how you look.
  2. The troubles of life don't get any easier.
  3. You will need help.
  4. In this sacrament Jesus offers Himself, in all His power as Creator, and love as Savior. He says, '**This is my body. This is my blood**'. He offers himself to be with you.
- B. You may struggle with temptations now.
1. You may be tempted to gossip, or miss church, or disobey your parents.
  2. You have sinned, and the temptations will keep coming.
  3. Death and judgement are the results of your sins too.
  4. You need forgiveness, and Jesus offers Himself in His death on the cross, and His rising again, He offers the forgiveness and salvation you need in this sacrament.

CONCLUSION - My son Tim has found out recently that life can be hard. For the last two years he has played in the Jazz Band at School. He is no longer in regular band, but got permission from the Band Teacher to have the special privilege of being in Jazz band. The Jazz band competition was going to be in Fairbanks the end of April, but now it is in Fairbanks the week after Easter, the same week as Tim's Confirmation on Sunday, and Confirmation Banquet on Friday. What does he do? He is only confirmed once, and this is a very important day in the life of faith of a Christian? Would he miss that? Or, would he disappoint the teacher who gave him

the privilege of playing in the Jazz band, and miss out on a trip he enjoyed last year? Tim did choose to grow in faith through His confirmation, but his teacher is disappointed. Life is hard. Our sin is the cause of trouble and pain. We need help.

Jesus invites all of you, Come to the table, to this mystery and celebration of strength and love and forgiveness. Come, take, and eat This is Jesus' body. Take and drink, This is Jesus' blood, for you, for the forgiveness of your sins, exactly what you need.