

**“For Many Means for You”**

*Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28).*

Tonight, we follow Jesus into the Upper Room. Tonight, we hear His words spoken over bread and wine. Tonight, we watch as He is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Tonight, the shadow of the cross stretches over everything. And yet, tonight is not only heavy with sorrow. It is also filled with gifts, promises, and comfort. Because on this night, our Lord Jesus Christ gives His Church something for every age. He gives us His own body and blood. He gives us forgiveness. He gives us Himself.

There was nothing unusual at first about the way this evening began. The disciples asked where they should prepare the Passover. They knew the meal. They knew the routine. They knew the story. This was the night when God had delivered His people from bondage in Egypt. This was the meal of remembrance. The lamb. The blood. The saving of Israel from the angel of death. Year after year, the people of God kept this feast and remembered that they had been spared by the mercy of the Lord. But on this particular night, everything changed.

Jesus doesn't simply rehearse the old story. He brings it to fulfillment. He takes bread. He gives thanks. He breaks it. He gives it to His disciples and says, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He takes the cup and says, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Suddenly, it becomes clear that this is no mere remembrance of a past deliverance. This is the beginning of the new covenant. This is the true Passover. This is the meal in which the Lamb of God gives Himself to His people. And that means the cost of this Passover will be greater than the first.

In Egypt, the blood of a lamb marked the wood of the doorframe. At Calvary, the blood of the Son of God will be poured out on the wood of the cross. In Egypt, the first Passover spared Israel from earthly death. Here, the true Passover rescues sinners from eternal death. In Egypt, the lamb died in place of the household. Here, Christ our Passover Lamb is sacrificed for the world.

So do not miss the weight of this night. When Jesus speaks over the cup, He is already delivering the meaning of His death before His body is handed over to His enemies. He tells you what the cross means before the nails are driven. His blood is not spilled by accident. It is not the tragic end of a failed teacher. It is the blood of the covenant. It is poured out with purpose. It is shed for forgiveness. And it is, in the words of Jesus, “for many.”

Now that phrase makes you nervous. “For many.” Why not simply say “for all”? Why not say “for you”? But, you see, the point of these words, “for many,” is not to narrow the reach of Christ’s mercy. It’s to magnify it. Jesus is not speaking of a tiny number, or an elite group, or some hidden class of the worthy. No. “For many” means that no one should think the sacrifice of Jesus is too small, too narrow, or too restricted. The many are the whole great company of sinners for whom Christ dies. And if He dies for many, then you are not left standing outside the promise. You are included in it. “For many” means “for you.”

That's the comfort of the Gospel, and tonight we need it, because the devil loves to speak in the singular when it comes to your sin. He tells you that your failures are too specific, too repeated, too embarrassing, and too deep. He tells you that maybe Christ died for others, but not for someone who has sinned like you. Not for someone who has doubted like you. Not for someone whose heart has wandered like yours. But Jesus speaks in just the opposite direction. He opens the promise wide: for many. And then in the Supper, He places that promise into your mouth personally: given and shed for you.

So tonight, do not argue with Jesus. Do not correct Him with your guilt. Do not try to be more accurate than His mercy. When He says His blood is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins, believe Him. And when He places His body and blood into your hands and upon your lips, believe that too. Tonight, His "for many" comes all the way down to you.

And that matters, because this is the only way sinners can stand in the presence of a holy God. You see it in today's Old Testament reading? Moses sprinkled the blood of the covenant on the people. Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up the mountain. And Scripture says, "They saw the God of Israel." And, even more astonishing, "they beheld God, and ate and drank." Think of that. Sinful men – in the presence of the Holy One – and they are not consumed. Why? Because the blood had been applied. They stood before God not in their own worthiness, but under the covenant mercy He had given. And tonight, that same mercy is given to you.

You do not come to this altar because you have succeeded in keeping your promises. Israel had not, the disciples had not, and You have not. You do not come because you have loved God with your whole heart and your neighbor as yourself. You do not come because you have made yourself holy enough to ascend the mountain. You are here right now because Jesus has shed the blood of the new covenant for you. You are here because His sacrifice has been made. You are here tonight because in Baptism you were marked with Christ. You come to this altar because the Lamb who was slain now gives you the fruits of His sacrifice in this Holy Supper.

And where Christ is present, there is forgiveness. Where Christ is present, fear is driven back. Where Christ is present, heaven touches earth. That is why this meal is no empty memorial and no bare remembrance. It is a remembrance, yes, but a remembrance that also does something. Christ does not merely ask you to think about Him tonight. He comes to you tonight. He gives you His body. He gives you His blood. He delivers to you, personally, the forgiveness He won for the world.

So tonight, we come to the Table of the Lord as people who need mercy, and as sinners who need forgiveness. We come with nothing to offer but our need, and that is exactly the kind of people this Supper is for.

Tonight, the Passover finds its fulfillment. Tonight, the Lamb is handed over. Tonight, the covenant blood is given to drink. Tonight, Jesus says something no sinner dares to expect, but every sinner desperately needs to hear: This is my body. This is my blood. This is my forgiveness. And because He says, "for many," you can be absolutely certain that He means for you. Go with the peace of this promise God has made to you today, and all God's people say, "Amen."

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