



Matthew 26:26-28

Maundy Thursday, April 2, '26
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And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

"What's new with you?" How do you answer that question? I always struggle with it. In fact, "What's new" is one of the more difficult questions to answer, in my opinion. "Not much," that's how I usually respond. Because life can be so every-day-the-same, it doesn't feel like anything is ever new. I get up, I drink coffee, I go to work, I go home, I make supper, I get the kids in bed, I watch TV, I go to bed. Nothing new. I read the current events—nothing new there either. Everyone is angry, everyone is wrong, everyone has the answers, we're at war, we're not at war, the economy is terrible, the economy is rebounding, the planet is being destroyed—"so, what else is new?"

King Solomon shared the same perspective, and he wrote: ***"What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, 'See, this is new'? It has been already in the ages before us."*** (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10)

We live in a world where life becomes routine, where history is always repeating itself, and where ***"there is nothing new under the sun."*** But *today* is Maundy Thursday. And there was something new on this day. Entering into this bleak landscape of the bland, given to this humdrum humanity was something entirely *new*: our Lord Jesus Christ, that very same night in which He was betrayed, took bread and, after, took wine and said, ***"This is my body," "This is my blood of the new covenant."***

Yes, here was something new, and the disciples, as they sat there at this Passover meal, they *realized* Jesus was doing something new. This was, after all, an ancient meal they were celebrating, the Passover, an annual feast that had been celebrated, when possible, every year for over 1,400 years. The meal always followed the same script: the lamb roasted, the thanks given, the cup blessed, the history recited, the bread broken, and, finally, with thanking, blessing, and breaking done—they ate.

But on *that* very same night in which He was betrayed, Jesus broke with tradition. ***"As they were eating,"*** He blessed the bread and broke it again. He blessed the cup and passed it again. This was clearly *not* part of that *old* tradition, the Passover, this was something *new*. And not only did Jesus *do* something new, He *said* something new: ***"This is my body," "This is my blood of the new covenant."***

Jesus' *actual* body? Jesus' *actual* blood? Yes, according to Jesus, yes, it was. Now, if anyone else had spoken like that, the disciples would have had to take their meaning as either *figurative*—that is, not *literally* body and blood, but merely *representing* His body and blood—or conclude that the speaker had a few screws loose. But given what they'd seen of Jesus already—the Man who says, ***"Be still"*** to the waves, and they obey; the Man who says to the dead, ***"Little girl, I say to you, arise,"*** and up she gets; the Man who says to the leper, ***"I will, be clean,"*** and he is made whole; the Man who says to a fig tree, ***"May no one ever eat fruit from you again,"*** and it withers away from the root; the Man who does the impossible and also *never* lies and *He's* the one who hands them the blessed bread with an impossible announcement that it *is* His body and then distributes to them the cup with an impossible announcement that it *is* His blood—well, if *Jesus* says it, understandable or not, it is just as He said.

And Jesus gives this to them, His very body and blood, *even though* He knows fully what they are soon to do! These faithless few who would sleep when asked to watch and pray as their friend prayed in agony, sweating great drops of blood; these faithless few who would deny Him—invoking curses and swearing that they do not even *know* Him; these faithless few who would forsake Him and flee into the night; these faithless few who would *not* go to the tomb early Sunday morning to embalm his body but would be hiding away for fear of the Jews; these faithless few who would proclaim, ***“Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe,”*** (John 20:25)—to such as these, Jesus gives this miracle meal.

Why? If Jesus *knew* what the men in that room were to do, why would He give this to *them*? Well, simply put, because *that* is exactly what this meal is for—***“the remission of sins.”*** Jesus gives them His body and blood *because* they were sinners and *because* they needed to be forgiven. He doesn’t give them these most precious gifts because they *deserve* them, He gives because they do *not* deserve them and that is why they need them.

That’s what ***“the new covenant”*** was all about. Hearing those words, ***“My blood of the new covenant,”*** the disciples should have and likely *did* recall the LORD’s words spoken through Jeremiah: ***“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will . . . forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*** (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

That *old* covenant was the one the Lord had given at Mt. Sinai, written in stone, disseminated through Moses, which said, ***“If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples,”*** to which the people declared, ***“All that the LORD has spoken we will do.”*** (Exodus 19:5, 8) And before the etching on those tablets had even grown cold, they had already replaced the LORD with a statue of gold. And thus, that covenant was just as broken as those two tablets were that Moses then threw down.

Well, this *new* covenant would not be like that *old* one. The fatal flaw in the *old* was that *we* were involved. Something was required of us that we had no capacity to fulfill. But this *new* covenant would not be contingent upon God’s people acting like God’s people. It would be based only on *this*, ***“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”***

Because of that, nothing that any of His disciples were about to do would make *this* covenant null and void. Not Peter’s denial. Not the disciples forsaking and fleeing. Not even *Judas’* betrayal could void this covenant. None of it will break this deal, because the covenant is God’s promise: ***“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.”*** And sins cannot nullify the *forgiveness* of sins.

And 2,000 years later, Jesus gives you the very same thing. This evening, He says to you, ***“Take, eat; this is My body.” “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”*** He gives this to you even though He knows you. Even though He knows what you have thought this evening, and even though He knows what you will do after this.

And that is why He gives it. He gives you His own body and blood because you need it. Because you need forgiveness. Because you need Him, so He gives Himself to you.

It can be sorely tempting to doubt the complimentary nature of this meal, that is, that it is given free of charge. Just as it can be so tempting to doubt that *all* of God's grace is "on the house." We have a hard time accepting this. If we are going to be given something so precious, so life-giving as Christ's body and blood, and given it as a *gift* from God, we at least want to be deserving of it. We *at least* want God to be able to gift it to us with the same joy with which we give birthday gifts to our children.

But how could God look at me that way and consider me with that joy when He *knows* what I will do tomorrow? When He *knows* the things of which I have not let go? When He *knows* my secrets and my shame and my guilt? How could *He* gift this meal to me with joy, and how could *I* receive His body and blood and not be the greatest hypocrite in this room, if not the world?

If I at all seem to be echoing the thoughts that you have held, then listen to this instruction: do not exchange the *new* covenant for the *old*. The *old*—that was the one that involved *you*, that required your cooperation, and that depended upon your input. If Jesus had said, "This is my blood of the *old* covenant," then you better believe that holiness would be required by God before you dared touch something so sacred to your lips.

But that is not what Jesus said. He said, "**Take, eat; this is My body.**" "**Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**" This is the new covenant, the new agreement. "**This is the covenant that [I make with you] declares the LORD: I will . . . forgive [your] iniquity, and I will remember [your] sin no more.**" And if the contract to which God has signed His name is simply that He would forgive your sins, well then, your sins do not cancel out His promise. Because *sins* cannot nullify the *forgiveness* of sins.

So, if you are a sinner, and your Savior invites you to the table this evening, then know that He does not invite you because He is *unaware* your deep faults. He invites you *because* He knows them, and because He bore them. And because He forgives them.

And by the way, when He describes this covenant as "*new*," He doesn't mean that it is "new in time." Even when He gave the disciples this meal, this covenant was already *old* as far as time was concerned. In fact, as they exist on the historical timeline, this *new* covenant pre-dated the *old* covenant. After all, *this* covenant, this promise to forgive sins, He made *before* the old one. It's the one He had given first to Adam and Eve, to answer for their sins. The promise He had renewed to Noah, to Abraham and Abraham's son and grandson, all of this *before* the covenant given to Moses.

So, no, it's not *new* because it's fresh off the presses. Jesus means "new" in terms of quality—never growing old, never failing, never needing to be replaced by something *newer*. This new covenant is the last and only agreement between you and God that you will ever need. It cannot be used up; it cannot be worn out or grow old; for it is based upon "**the steadfast love of the LORD [that] never ceases; his mercies [that] never come to an end [and] are new every morning.**" (Lam. 3:22-23) So lay hold of that forgiveness which the Lord gives to you with His body and blood, and see that there is indeed *something "new under the sun"*: "*New life... new light, new hope, new strength, new powers, [and] may grace our every way attend until we reach our journey's end.*" (TLH #369 v. 6) Amen.