

Luke 22:7-20

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.”

⁹ “Where do you want us to prepare for it?” they asked.

¹⁰ He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, ¹¹ and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹² He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there.”

¹³ They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. On this Maundy Thursday, the commemoration of the institution of the Lord's Supper, which we too will participate in later, there are a lot of things we could spend our time talking about. The miracle of the real presence—how there is Jesus' body and blood, present in with and under the bread and wine; the Passover of the Old Testament, how the celebration of this feast, which Jesus eats, is a picture of his perfect sacrifice for all humanity. The humble servant of Jesus who washes his disciples feet as they debate who is the greatest among them. I could fill up this time with talking about many other things, too: A war in Ukraine, the weirdly long shadow that Covid has placed on our world, or even just the changing weather. There are many things that we could be talking about this evening.

And Jesus had a lot of other things he could be talking about as well.

It's a bit surprising, isn't it? Jesus is at the cusp of his suffering. This very evening, Jesus will go out to a Garden and be arrested. He will be put on a sham trial with many liars coming to accuse him. Not to mention the next day, where tomorrow he's going to endure all of those sufferings of the cross: Beaten bloody, so weak that somebody else has to carry his cross to Golgatha. Scorched skin with a mouth so parched, and all he receives to quench it is vinegar. Absolute abandonment, so complete that Jesus will cry out, “My God, why have you forsaken me?”

Not to mention another thing. His disciples. Those disciples of his. The ones who, after years of instruction, still haven't figured out that Jesus is going to have to die and that he's not coming to set up an earthly kingdom. Those disciples who wouldn't even volunteer to

wash the feet of the Son of God at the moment. Those disciples: Peter, who would deny that he even knew Jesus before the night was over. Thomas would come to doubt Jesus' resurrection. Those disciples would run into the darkness in the garden and hideaway after his crucifixion.

On a night like that, with friends like these. You would think that the evening in that upper room would have gone differently. But what does Jesus say? "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." Isn't that something? If you and I, or any other person in the entire world, were in that position, there would have been a radically different account, wouldn't there?

Jesus could have said a lot of different things to those disciples too. He could have given them harsh rebukes. Knowing the sins, they were going to fall into, knowing how long it took them to get these concepts into their heads, knowing the deep and stubborn sins that they can't seem to rid themselves of.

Jesus could have done a lot of different things: You know what, this very night, I am going to be led away by my captors and tied up literally and figuratively until my death, so I desire to get some rest before this all unfolds. I will not get a chance to get a good meal in my belly before the sins of the world will be placed upon me and me alone, so I think I'm going to get a complete meal in peace to give me some strength. You know what, I will have people screaming, cursing, blaspheming me right in my face. I think I will have my meal in a small amount of peace and tranquility.

But what does Jesus say to them? "**I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.**" This evening. The last evening that I will have before I suffer, I eagerly desire to institute this Holy Communion, my last will and testament, my New Covenant for the forgiveness of sins.

On this night, of all nights, Jesus has nothing better, nothing that he more desires to do. Then to give the forgiveness of sins. The Last Supper, the institution of the Blessed Sacrament of Communion, is such a powerful account of Jesus' love. With the thousands of other things that were on his mind, the gargantuan task that was on his plate for the coming hours did not overcome his desire to give the sacrament and the forgiveness of sins.

But another powerful image of the Last Supper comes with the words: I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover **with you**. With you. With those disciples. Those human beings. Those sinful human beings. God desired nothing more than to give the forgiveness of sins to whom? To sinners.

In the institution of the Lord's Supper, we see into God's own heart. We see that God himself desires something. He desire this thing deeply. What God desires so profoundly, so badly, so intensely, is to give forgiveness of sins to sinful human beings. Sinful human beings like the disciples, like you and me.

That is one of the reasons why Holy Communion is such a unique, miraculous thing for you and for me. Because on that last night, there was nothing that Jesus had better to do: spend time with his disciples and give them his Body and his Blood for the forgiveness of sins.

That sentiment of our Savior has continued to endure up to the very moment. With all of the things that God has going on, there is absolutely nothing that he has better to do than to come to you with the forgiveness of sins. There is absolutely nothing that God desires more than for us, as sinful, stubborn humans, to go to his table and there to receive a gift, his gift, the bread and his very body, the wine, and his very blood.

Jesus doesn't want us to come to his Supper when we feel worthy, when we've had a good week, and then receive this because we are worthy. God doesn't want us to abandon this Most Holy of Meals because of convenience. Jesus wants you, as a sinner, to come to his table to receive his forgiveness. We don't participate in Communion because we are worthy of it; no, we come to Communion. Our Savior himself eagerly desired to give it to sinful disciples because our Savior eagerly desires to give it to you sinful disciples.

Brothers and sisters, as we commemorate the institution of the Holy Communion, let us draw near to our Savior who has nothing better to do than to draw near to you. Let us not focus on our worthiness as his followers but on the forgiveness he so eagerly offers. Let us come to his table and receive his Grace on our lips. Amen.