



ST. MICHAEL'S SERMONS

Greenville, SC
Maundy Thursday
April 13, 2006

THE LORD'S SUPPER

It is the Lord's Supper! Not the Lutheran's Supper – Or the Baptist's Supper – Or the Methodist's Supper – Or the Catholic's Supper. It is the Lord's Supper! Not the Church's Supper – Or the Pastor's Supper – Or the People's Supper – or the Liturgy's Supper. It is the Lord's Supper! Not OUR Supper! The Lord's Supper!

“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you!” It is the Lord's Supper! He established it – He sustains it – He invites us to eat and drink! It was His last supper with His Disciples. It became the Church's first supper. Because then and there the Church was formed and forged. Because here and now it is still the center and source; the hearth and the heart of the Church. But it is the Church's first supper because it is first and foremost the Lord's Supper! “For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you ...!” writes Paul in the earliest written account of this Last Supper and the only story from Jesus' life told by Paul: “That the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said: “This is my body that is for you! Do this in remembrance of Me!”

DO THIS! This that He does – we are to do. Take bread, give thanks, join it to His Word of Promise. Break it and eat it together! Take wine, give thanks, join it to His Word of Promise so that it becomes The New Covenant in His Blood! And drink of it. This that He does – we still do! “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes!”

Why did Jesus do these things? Why does Jesus command us to do these things? Think about those 12 disciples, different as day and night, a difficult mix of personalities and temperaments. One would be dead before another day ended. Others would have to be called and anointed. The women among them would need to become full partners. He Himself would not be physically present with them. He knew what He was about to do. He knew God would use it to redeem the world. But what could possibly keep His followers together? Bring them again and again into relationship with Himself and with each other? Transform the walls that would divide them into a table that would convene them – form them into community, energize them with new and abundant life, shape them again and again into His Church and equip them for Mission and Ministry “serving Christ in the world!”

Eating together! Eating together His Supper! Eating together this simple meal which forever will connect them and us in simple and profound ways to the overwhelming mystery and awesome majesty of the death He dies and the resurrection with which He is raised and the new life He creates and give to us!

It's like in the story of the Prodigal Son: What happens the next day? The father has two sons: one does everything right, the other does everything wrong. The father invites them to the same party. The Prodigal returns and asks to become a slave so he can sleep in the barn and have three square meals a day. The father says NO! You sleep in the house! You get your old room back; your bed is still made! And the elder son, the one who did everything right, says this is wrong – just plain wrong. He gets angry. He won't come to the party.

And that's where Jesus ends the story. But what happens the next day? The father must have said when he left his elder son in the field, "I'll see you at breakfast." Those two boys must have shared breakfast and lunch and supper and on and on and on, there at the same table. And there at the same table they learned to live together again; to become a family again; to work side by side again. They could not have done it alone. Sometimes they weren't sure they could do it at all. But it is the father's presence – and his persistent, passionate invitation to share supper at his table of grace. Which makes possible the new and abundant life which flows from this restoration of relationship!

It all happens as they eat together again and again at their father's table! "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes!" You yourself are personally and powerfully involved in His death and resurrection and coming again! And He is personally powerfully involved in you! And all things, all people, all relationships, all communities are made new!

You may not sing the same songs or wear the same clothes or speak the same language or interpret Scripture the same way or even understand how this Sacramental Supper works. But you can eat together at My table of Grace and become My Church!

The ancient peoples had an odd phrase: "The navel of the earth." They would use it to name a place – a physical, geographical place – of such significance: a high mountain top – the mouth of a deep cavern – the head of a long valley with a vista all the way to the sea – that it seemed to them it must have been the place where God stood to create all creation. It was the navel of the earth. Creation's belly button! The Supper we share – our Lord's Supper – it is the place God's own Christ stands to re-create all Creation! And tonight – again – He invites us – you and me – to stand here and participate.

DO THIS! For the remembrance of Me! For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes!

AMEN