

## Sermon followed by Service- 4/2/26 - Holy Thursday - Matthew 26:26-28

For years we sat in the pews while mom and dad and the other adults went up to the front of the church. Some of us left behind were content to just have some extra space to stretch out, some freedom. Some of you were curious - "Whatcha doing?" For some of us the answer was "Holy Communion." For some the answer was "the Lord's Supper." Some of us were content - "OK." Some of you were more curious - "What's that?" "What's that?" Good question, isn't it? And when we heard the pastor or maybe our parents or Sunday School teachers repeat the words of Jesus; "This is my body; this is my blood," we may have been filled with even more good questions, or maybe just a scrunched up face that said: "Huh? Body? Blood?"

Our questions weren't always "Whatcha doing?" or "What's that?" were they? Sometimes when we saw the wafer we just wanted to know: "What's it taste like?" And the answers never really satisfied, did they? "It tastes like paper. It tastes like nothing." Almost any and every cracker in the store tastes better than this wafer. Almost every kind of bread in the bakery tastes better than this bread. And the wine? I can't think of any wine drinker I know serving up Mogen David Concord Grape to their guests - "You really need to try this. You'll love the bouquet." I'm not saying it would be wrong; it's just outside of my experience, my narrow, very narrow experience.

Bread that doesn't taste like much of anything. Wine that doesn't taste like anything special. That's so like God, isn't it? He loves to take the ordinary and share his most special blessings. Instead of giving us fantastic visions to share the secrets of his heart and mind, he shares his secrets through common, ordinary people like me and you. Instead of sending angels, he calls common, ordinary people like me and you to share his love. And when he adopts us into his family, the family of God himself, what does he do? He uses simple water and simple words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Our gloriously holy and transcendent God loves to use the common and ordinary to share his greatest blessings.

And that's what we have here in Holy Communion. For his Lord's Supper, Jesus used simple Passover bread, a simple unleavened bread, and so we use a simple bread made of flour and water unadulterated, without leaven or yeast to make it rise. And wine, grape wine. Jesus used grape wine, so we use grape wine. Some churches use a white wine to help prevent wine stains; like most churches, we use a red wine helping us remember the blood of Christ.

Common, ordinary bread and wine. But then Jesus does something special. He speaks. With the bread he says; "Take eat, this is my body." With the wine, he says: "Take drink, this is my blood." Jesus takes the common and ordinary, and by his Word, he consecrates it for a special purpose; he makes the bread and wine to be sacred, special, for a special purpose. But Jesus does more than make the common, ordinary bread and wine to be special bread and wine. Jesus' Words: "This is my body," reveal a new Truth - Jesus is giving us his body in, with, and under the bread. Jesus' Words: "This is my blood," reveal a special, holy Truth - Jesus is giving us his blood in, with, and under the wine. Why do we say "in, with, and under"? Because we don't know how else to say it. Jesus' Word in the Lord's Supper works a wonderful miracle - the bread and wine aren't just bread and wine, but Jesus' body and blood are together with the bread and wine. In other words, the bread is in communion with the body of Christ and the wine is in communion with the blood of Christ - a holy communion.

Jesus doesn't say that the bread and wine change into his body and blood. There are some who teach that the bread and wine change into the body and blood, but that goes beyond what Scripture says. Paul says we still eat bread and drink wine, but as we eat the bread and drink the wine, we also have Jesus' body and blood in communion, together with the bread and the wine. In other words, Jesus' body and blood are really present with the bread and wine which are also really present.

It doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense (up in our heads), and it doesn't fit our senses of taste, touch, or smell. The miracle that Jesus' body and blood are really present with the bread and wine doesn't make sense, so some take the miracle out of the Lord's Supper. They teach that in the Lord's Supper the bread and wine just represent Christ's body and blood, the bread

and wine are reminders of Christ's body and blood. Why? Because Jesus' words don't make sense. And Jesus' presence doesn't make sense - it doesn't make sense that Jesus can be at God's right hand in heaven and right here in the Lord's Supper. And because it doesn't make sense, they say it isn't possible. But whether it makes sense to us or not isn't the issue. Whether it makes sense to us or not doesn't determine its truth. When Jesus says something, whether it makes sense or not - we know it's true. Sense or nonsense doesn't determine truth or non-truth. God and his Word determine what is true or not true. So when Jesus says he is at God's right hand in heaven and at the same time he is right here with his body and blood in the Lord's Supper - instead of twisting his words, we take him at his word and we believe him. Why? Not because it makes sense, but because he says so.

Can I say there is something else that doesn't make sense here? Why would Jesus want to be with me? Why would Jesus want me to be together with him? I am not a catch. I am not good company. My heart does not make a good home. Think of who God is ... think of how God is ... And yet he wants to be with me, and he wants me to be with him. How can he be with me without torching me? How can I be with him without him torching me? Forgiveness. There can be no presence with God without forgiveness. There can be no us-with-God without forgiveness. There can be no God-with-us without forgiveness. So what does Jesus give, promise, offer with his body and blood? Forgiveness and presence. The forgiveness and presence promised in the New Covenant - "I will be your God and you will be my people. I will forgive your sin and remember your transgressions no longer."

He will remember no longer, What he does remember and will always remember is you and his promise to you in Jesus. He will remember you and his promise all the way to heaven - where we will share communion with God on a whole new level.

So why are we here? For a taste of that promise of forgiveness and togetherness, for a taste of that holy communion with God. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

# Holy Thursday

April 02, 2026

## ORGAN MEDITATION

*Communion Medley*

by Valerie Floeter

*"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent"*

Arranged by Carl Ziebell

*"I Come, O Savior, to Your Table"*

By Valerie Floeter

## OPENING HYMN

*"O Lord, We Praise You"*

**Hymn 673**

O Lord, we praise you, bless you, and adore you,  
in thanksgiving bow before you.

Here with your body and your blood you nourish  
our weak souls that they may flourish.

O Lord, have mercy!

May your body, Lord, born of Mary,  
that our sins and sorrows did carry,  
and your blood for us plead  
in all trial, fear, and need.

O Lord, have mercy!

Your holy body into death was given,  
life to win for us in heaven.

No greater love than this to you could bind us;  
may this feast of that remind us!

O Lord, have mercy!

Lord, your love and kindness did move you;  
let your supper move us to love you.

All our debt you have paid;  
peace with God once more is made.

O Lord, have mercy!

May God bestow on us his grace and favor  
that we follow Christ our Savior  
and live together here in love and union,  
nor despise this blest communion.

O Lord, have mercy!

Let not your good Spirit forsake us;  
grant that heav'nly-minded he make us.  
Give your Church, Lord, to see  
days of peace and unity.

O Lord, have mercy!

M: Lord God, you have brought us safely to this hour of evening prayer. We thank you for providing all that we need for body and life. Bless us who have gathered in your name. Forgive our sins. Speak to our hearts. Dispel our sorrows with the comfort of your Word, and receive our hymns of thanks and praise, through Jesus Christ, our living Savior, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

#### THE GREAT LITANY

M: O God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth,

C: **Have mercy on us.**

M: O God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

C: **Have mercy on us.**

M: O God the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide,

C: **Have mercy on us.**

M: From all spiritual blindness; from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice; and from all lack of charity:

**C: Good Lord, deliver us.**

M: From all false doctrine, heresy, and schism, from hardness of heart and contempt for your Word and your will:

**C: Good Lord, deliver us.**

M: From earthquake and tempest; from drought, fire, and flood; from civil strife and violence; from war and murder; and from dying suddenly and unprepared:

**C: Good Lord, deliver us.**

M: In our times of trouble, in our times of prosperity, in the hour of death, and on the day of judgment:

**C: Good Lord, deliver us.**

M: Receive our prayers, O Lord our God.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: Govern and direct your holy Church, fill it with love and truth, and grant it that unity which is according to your will.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: Enlighten all ministers with true knowledge and understanding of your Word, that by their preaching and living they may declare it clearly and show its truth.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: Encourage and prosper your servants who spread the gospel in all the world, and send out laborers into the harvest.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: Bless and keep your people, that all may find and follow their true vocation and ministry.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: Give us hearts to love and reverence you, that we may diligently live according to your commandments.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: To all your people, give grace to hear and receive your Word and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: Come to the help of all who are in danger, necessity, and trouble; protect all who travel by land, air, or water; and show your pity on all prisoners and captives.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: Strengthen and preserve all women who are in childbirth and all young children, and comfort the aged, the bereaved, and the lonely.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: Defend and provide for the widowed and the orphaned, the refugees and the homeless, the unemployed, and all who are desolate and oppressed.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

M: Heal those who are sick in body or mind, and give skill and compassion to all who care for them.

**C: Hear us, good Lord.**

**C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

**CHOIR**

*“O Lord, Have Mercy On Me”*

1. O Lord, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner.

O Lord, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner.

2. I cry from out of the depths, yes, I cry to you, Lord.

O Lord, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner.

3. If you kept a record of sins, O Lord, then no one could stand.  
Forgiveness comes from you alone, alone.  
My soul, it waits for the Lord, my hope lies all in his word.  
I wait like watchmen who wait for dawn to come.
4. O Lord, have mercy on me for I am a sinner.  
I cry from out of the depths, yes, I cry to you, Lord.
5. O, put your hope in the Lord; love with deep devotion;  
redemption in great abundance flows to you.  
Out of the depths I cry, O Lord, hear my voice;  
for you redeem us from all iniquity.
6. O Lord, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner. O Lord, have mercy  
on me.

## GOSPEL

**Mark 14:12-26**

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"

"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 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."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

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

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

***"When You Woke That Thursday Morning"***

**Hymn 416**

When you woke that Thursday morning,  
Savior, teacher, faithful friend,  
thoughts of self and safety scorning,  
knowing how the day would end;  
Lamb of God, foretold for ages,  
now at last the hour had come  
when but One could pay sin's wages:  
you assumed their dreadful sum.

Never so alone and lonely,  
longing with tormented heart  
to be with your dear ones only  
for a quiet hour apart:

sinless Lamb and fallen creature,  
one last paschal meal to eat,  
one last lesson as their teacher,  
washing your disciples' feet.

What was there that you could give them  
that would never be outspent,  
what great gift that would outlive them,  
what last will and testament?  
"Show me and the world you love me,  
know me as the Lamb of God:  
do this in remembrance of me,  
eat this body, drink this blood."

One in faith, in love united,  
all one body, you the head,  
when we meet, by you invited,  
you are with us, as you said.  
One with you and one another  
in a unity sublime,  
see in us your sister, brother,  
one in ev'ry place and time.

One day all the Church will capture  
that bright vision glorious,  
and your saints will know the rapture  
that your heart desired for us,  
when the longed-for peace and union  
of the greatest and the least  
meet in joyous, blest communion  
in your never-ending feast.

## OFFERING

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## INSTRUCTION FOR THE END OF LENT

M: In this Lenten season we have heard again how our Lord walked the path of suffering which led him to the cross for our salvation. We have also heard our Lord's call to intensify our struggle against sin, death, and the devil—all that keeps us from loving God and each other. This is the struggle to which we were committed at Baptism; God's forgiveness and the power of his Spirit to amend our lives continue with us because of his love for us in Jesus, our Savior.

Within the family of the Church, God never wearies of giving peace and new life. In the absolution we receive forgiveness as from God himself. This absolution we should not doubt, but firmly believe that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven, for it comes to us in the name and by the command of our Lord.

We who receive God's love in Jesus Christ are called to love one another, to be servants to each other, as Jesus became our servant.

In Holy Communion the members of Christ's body participate most intimately in his love. Remembering our Lord's last supper with his disciples, we eat the bread and drink the cup of this meal. Together we receive the Lord's gift of his body and blood for forgiveness and participate in that new covenant that makes us one with him and one another. The Lord's Supper is the promise of the great banquet we will share with all the faithful when our Lord returns, the joyous culmination of our reconciliation with God and each other.

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

M: Let us confess our sins to God and ask for his forgiveness.

**C: Almighty God, merciful Father,  
I confess to you that I have not loved you with all my heart.  
In what I have done and left undone,  
I have pursued my ways instead of your ways.  
For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity.  
I am truly sorry for my sins.  
I repent of them.  
I beg for your mercy, O Lord.**

*Silence for meditation.*

M: Forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us.

**C: Cleanse me from my sins.  
Release me from my guilt.  
Grant me your Holy Spirit to amend my sinful life.**

M: The almighty God has been merciful to us and has sent his Son to die for all. For his sake, God forgives our sins and calls us from darkness to his marvelous light. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

## EXHORTATION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven us and reconciled us to God and has promised us the power to forgive and love each other. Relying on his promise, therefore, be reconciled with one another.

**All: Brothers and sisters, may the peace of Christ rule in our hearts,  
in our words, and in our actions.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

M: Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion you give us your true body and blood as a remembrance of your suffering and death on the cross. Grant us so firmly to believe your words and promise that we may always partake of this Sacrament to our eternal good; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

### WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink, from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

### LAMB OF GOD *Agnus Dei*

Lamb of God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the world's sin,  
Lamb of God, Lamb of God,  
have mercy upon us.

DISTRIBUTION (Guests, please see our communion practice on p. 2)  
(Gluten free wafers are available; please see Pastor.)

HYMN

*"It Was a Dark and Dismal Night"*

Hymn 417

It was a dark and dismal night  
when pow'rs of earth and hell arose  
against the Son, our God's delight,  
and friends betrayed him to his foes.

Before the mournful scene began,  
he took the bread and blessed and broke.  
What love through all his actions ran!  
What wondrous words of grace he spoke!

"This is my body, slain for sin;  
receive and eat the living food."  
Then took the cup and blessed the wine:  
"This is my all-atoning blood."

"Do this," he said, "till time shall end,  
in mem'ry of your dying friend;  
meet at my table and record  
the love of your departed Lord."

Jesus, your feast we celebrate;  
we show your death; we sing your name  
till you return and we shall eat  
the marriage supper of the Lamb.

SONG OF SIMEON *Nunc Dimittis*

O Lord, now let your servant  
Depart in peace, assured:  
For I have seen your promised  
Incarnate, saving Word –  
A Light that will enlighten  
All gloom where Gentiles dwell;  
The brilliant, crowning glory  
Of those in Israel!

All glory to the Father,  
All glory to the Son,  
All glory to the Spirit,  
Forever three in one;  
For as in the beginning,  
Is now, shall ever be,  
God's triune name resounding  
Through all eternity.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

## STRIPPING OF THE ALTAR

The altar, which symbolizes Christ, is stripped in token of Jesus' abandonment by his disciples in Gethsemane. After the choir finishes singing, we exit the church silently and return to continue our worship tomorrow, Good Friday. If you wish to speak with pastor, he will be available in the parking lot, weather permitting.

## CHOIR ANTHEM

### *"In Hopelessness and Near Despair"*

CWS 738

*In hopelessness and near despair, I cry to you, my Savior!  
My guilt is more than I can bear. I have not earned your favor.  
You know me as I really am: How much is truth, how much is sham;  
Why should you heed my pleading?*

*I see my heart's condition now, My heart's diverse affections.  
Why do I love the things you loathe; I'm torn in two directions:  
Now prodigal, now Pharisee. O God, be merciful to me;  
Who else but you can help me?*

*I tremble as I feel your hand, Expecting retribution,  
Yet hear no curse or reprimand, But grace and absolution:  
With you there is forgiveness, Lord, You speak the sweet, consoling Word,  
And I am sure you love me!*

*Forgiven, free of guilt and shame, Grant me some time to render  
A gift to glorify your name, Love to reflect your splendor:  
This world must know what I have learned,  
That you bestow what none has earned: The joy of full forgiveness!*

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*We welcome you to come and worship with us again!*

*Good Friday Tenebrae Service at 7:00 pm and  
Easter Sunday Festival Service at 9:00 am*

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## Service Participants

**Preacher and Presiding Minister**

**Organist**

**Choir Director**

**Choir**

**Musicians**

Pastor Kevin Raddatz

Mrs. Beth Rockwell

Dr. Tim Samelson

St. John Senior Choir

Mrs. Beth Rockwell, *flute*

Miss Meredith Fein, *violin*

Mr. Charles Ledvina, *bass*

## **The Sacrament of Holy Communion**

**From Martin Luther's *Small Catechism***

As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.

### **The Institution of Holy Communion**

*First: What is the sacrament of Holy Communion?*

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

*Where is this written?*

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the Apostle Paul tell us: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

### **The Blessings of Holy Communion**

*Second: What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking?*

That is shown us by these words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

### **The Power of Holy Communion**

*Third: How can eating and drinking do such great things?*

It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking. And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.

### **The Reception of Holy Communion**

*Fourth: Who, then, is properly prepared to receive this sacrament?*

Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is not prepared, because the words "for you" require nothing but hearts that believe.