

Sermon Followed by Service

Holy Thursday 2025 “Take eat; take drink. My body and my blood for you!”

I’ve been specially invited - specially invited to a steak dinner with baked potato, salad and dessert - all free - with a bonus - a sales pitch on retirement planning! I’ve been specially invited to go on a dream vacation at a dream resort - all free. I’ve been specially invited to go on a cruise - the deal of a lifetime. And I thought: “Wow!” And then I thought: “Why me?” And “What’s in it for them?”

Years ago, I called the red phone number on one of those postcard invitations; it didn’t take long to figure out - no way that was going to work - too many hoops to jump through, too many hidden fees to be free - Too Good To Be True. Now when I get those special invitations, if I feel myself getting suckered in, I google and read a couple reviews - SPAM, SCAM, Too Good To Be True.

I’ve been specially invited. We’ve been specially invited. **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”** Part of me says: “Too Good To Be True.” Why? I think of what I’m like when I’m weary and burdened - I’m not great company. It makes me think: “Why me? Why would he invite me? It must be Too Good To Be True.”

But when we watch Jesus in action, what do we see? We see the “Too Good To Be True” is really true! We see untouchables, people with leprosy, people who if they got too close to anybody else, they would be chased off with sticks and stones, shouts and disgust. We see untouchables approach Jesus, and Jesus doesn’t pull away or chase away. Instead, his heart goes out to them; his hand reaches out to them. He touches the untouchable; he includes the untouchable in his mercy. There’s more. When we watch Jesus in action, what else do we see? We see “sinners,” we see the rejects of this world - proper people wouldn’t be seen associating with them. We see Jesus going out of his way, making it part of his day and his way to eat with them and spend time with them ... and invite them to be with him. It might sound too good to be true, but Jesus includes our worst in his grace.

It makes me wonder, if I were there with Jesus when Jesus was reaching out to the untouchable, when Jesus was spending time with the local rejects ... would I have felt uncomfortable, awkward being seen with them? Or would I have felt welcome to be with him? My heart has a ways to go to be like Jesus' heart; how about yours?

When we see Jesus in action, when we hear his invitation, "**Come to me,**" what do we see? They fit, don't they? Jesus' words, his invitation, fits his actions. When see Jesus in action, when we hear his invitation, "**Come to me,**" what do we see? I think of Christmas - "But there is room and welcome there for me."

Sounds good, doesn't it? It's not "too good to be true": it's more "one size fits all." "God so loved the world. Good news of great joy for all the people. Come to me all you who are weary and burdened. And there is room and welcome there for me." Sounds good to be part of the all - if everyone's included, I must be included! But Jesus has more for us; he has something special for you.

For those times when trouble has you on edge; when fear and death are in the air; when guilt has you feeling sick inside; for those times when "one-size-fits-all" just doesn't seem to fit you, when you need something more, something different to touch your heart so that you know the "too good to be true" is really "true for you," ... Jesus has that something more, that something different for you.

It was one of those weeks, coming up on one of those days. The disciples knew trouble was coming; Jesus knew his disciples were in for a time of fear and guilt like they had never known before. So after days, weeks, months, years of talking to the world, inviting the world with his "one-size-fits-all" invitation, tonight Jesus pulls his Twelve aside for something different, something special for just his inner circle.

That night, Jesus told them troubles were coming, but they didn't need to be troubled. He told them Satan and the world would be coming after them, but they didn't need to worry. He told them that night they would all fall away on account of him, but he wouldn't fall or fail them. How could that be? After he died, he would rise again to rule, and he would set his disciples up to live and to rule with him.

But Jesus wasn't content to just tell them. That night, as Jesus and his disciples were celebrating the Passover - celebrating "we have a God who saves!" - Jesus gave them something more. With his inner circle at the table with him, Jesus took the bread and the wine of the Passover meal, and Jesus invited: "**Take eat; take drink,**" and he promised: "**this is my body; this is my blood.**" A special invitation, a special promise for his inner circle.

When you're on edge, Jesus invites you as part of his inner circle: "**Take eat, take drink, my body and my blood for you.**" "**The blood of the covenant for you**" - you have God's promise: I will be your God and you will be my people; I've got you safe with me." When you're feeling sick with guilt, Jesus invites you as part of his inner circle: "**Take eat, take drink - the blood of the covenant for you.**" You have God's promise: "**I will forgive your sin and remember your transgressions no longer.**" When you feel dread and you feel death in you and around you, Jesus invites you: "**Take eat, take drink, my body and blood for you.** I'm here for you. And some day, some day we'll celebrate life together in heaven where there will be no death or dread."

Jesus could have said the same thing when he fed the 5000; he could have said the same thing when he had the crowds gathered around him at the Temple; he could have said the same thing at who knows how many other meals. But he didn't. He saved this something special; he saved his Supper, for his inner circle. Do you wonder if this is for you? Let's talk. Do you wish it were for you here with us? Let's talk. Do you think it's "too good to be true"? Let's listen.

Jesus' invitation, Jesus' promise might sound too good to be true. But when we look and listen to Jesus, what do we see? At the cross, we see what Jesus was willing to do - for the untouchables - **“Father, forgive them,”** for the outcasts - **“Today, you will be with me in paradise;** for you and for me, he did it all - **“it is finished.”** And on Easter, what will we see? What Jesus can do - he can make the dead alive. That's right, Jesus can make the impossible true. Jesus' invitation and promise isn't too good to be true. In his Supper, you get to know - with Jesus, it's true for you. Amen.

HOLY THURSDAY

April 17, 2025

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. **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.**

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Exodus 12:1-14

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

“This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance.”

HYMN

“The Blood of the Lamb”

Hymn 418

The Father sees his children's chains. From Pharaoh's land they cry in pain.
To rescue them, he makes a way: the blood of the lamb.

The lamb is slain as sun is set— a perfect lamb, without defect.
They stain their doors with innocence: the blood of the lamb.

As midnight looms, the hour of death,
God seeks the firstborn, steals their breath,
but passes o'er doors drenched in red: the blood of the lamb.

Children of God, we too were slaves: our master—sin! Our end—the grave!
But freedom came in crimson shades: the blood of the Lamb.

This perfect Lamb is Jesus Christ. He gave himself as sacrifice.
His life poured out, the final price: the blood of the Lamb.

The blood he spilled, the life he spent, he gives us now in sacrament.
Eternal life on Christ depends: the blood of the Lamb.

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.

SERMON

Mark 14:12-26

OFFERING

*If you prefer online giving, you may scan
this code with your mobile device.*



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. **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. **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, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - men.

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***

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*

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.