

“This is My body. This is My blood.”

Matthew 26:17-30

Throughout our Lenten journey, we have been focusing on God’s plan of salvation. Christ’s birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection was God’s plan for saving this fallen world. God’s creation was spoiled with sin, Christ came to make all things new. If you want a one line summary of the entire Bible this would suffice: God’s creation was spoiled with sin, Christ came to make all things new. That’s the whole story – without all the detail.

As Jesus and His disciples gather in the upper room, they do so with the intent of remembering how God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. This is something that all Jews were commanded to do. This is something that the disciples had done every year of their life. But now, Jesus was going to bring a new understanding to the wine and the unleavened bread.

“This is My body. This is My blood.” This is not the first time the disciples have been faced with the reality of Christ’s flesh and blood being real food and drink. Early in His ministry, as is recorded in John chapter 6, Jesus said, “My flesh is real food and

My blood is real drink . . . and unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”

Even in the early days of Jesus’ ministry, He was preparing His disciples for the Word and Sacrament ministry of the church. The 3-plus years of preaching and teaching was part of God’s plan of salvation. But as we see, Jesus’ preaching and miracles did not sway the masses. It would be the disciples who preach, baptize, and, with the believers, participate in the body and blood of Christ. It is through the Word and Sacrament ministry of the disciples that the Holy Spirit grows and enlarges the family of God known as the church.

There are many in our world today who say Jesus was just speaking metaphorically – symbolically “this is My body; this is My blood.” I find it curious that those who heard His words in John 6 took them to be literal and they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it? . . . [and] many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.”

And Jesus does not stop them from leaving and say, “Wait, wait, you don’t understand. I am just speaking symbolically.” In fact, He chastises them for taking offense at Him. And then asks the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” To which Peter replies, “Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life?”

In the upper room, Jesus presents more words of eternal life. “This is My body. This is My blood” given and shed for you. The broken body and shed blood of the Son of God was the plan of salvation. It remains the plan of salvation. It is no small detail.

The one thing that those disbelieving hearers in John 6 had right was that “this is a hard saying.” I look at the bread. I look at the wine. It is not logical. It is not rational. I need the eyes of faith to see the real food and to taste the real drink.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus had been preparing His disciples to receive Him under the form of bread and wine. He is real food. He is real drink. He boldly proclaims, “I am the Bread of Life.” What we see in the upper room was always part of the plan.

He does not come with some feel-good remembrance meal. He offers His real broken body and His real shed blood. Just like we will see tomorrow on Good Friday, Jesus does not offer up a half-hearted symbolic gesture for the forgiveness of sins. He offers up His real hands and feet to be pierced. He offers His real blood to be poured out. His life really did end.

I can’t explain how God could die and rise again, but He did. I can’t explain how the body and blood of Jesus Christ will be right here for you to eat and drink. I look at the bread. I look at the

wine. It is not logical. It is not rational. I need the eyes of faith to see real the food and to taste the real drink.

I read the Word of God and rejoice that I get to participate in the details of God's plan. Jesus says, "This is My body. This is My blood -- given and shed for you." Amen.