

THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK  
Redeemer Lutheran - Milwaukee  
April 19, 1973

"DO YOU REMEMBER?"

"This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' . . . 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

I Cor. 11:24-25

Do you remember ANYONE who has really made a lasting impression upon you? Maybe a former pastor, or teacher or boss? Maybe a parent or child? Maybe it was the way he/she looked at you -- or the way you had that sixth sense of communication with each other. Maybe it was just that person's dedication to his vocational calling. Maybe it was as simple as a smile. But, what a lasting remembrance it has been!

Do you remember when you first met your wife or husband, your fiance or a beloved friend? Aren't those chilling maybe even nerve-tingling moments to remember?! For many of us, those are remembrances never to be forgotten.

Do you remember the first time you told that favorite guy or gal, "I love you." For some of us that was a moment of sweaty palms and maybe even nervous tension. For those three words packed so much power and commitment. Could we live up to the demand of that simple yet explosive phrase? Since that moment finds few repeat performances in a lifetime, it is not easily forgotten.

At the other end of time - do you remember those last moments that you may have spent with a loved one before his/her death. Whether at a hospital bedside or over the dinner table, those can be precious remembrances. The words or silences, the supporting touches, the wipe of a brow -- those are living memories of love. They may bring a tear of sadness, but they are filled with eternal joy.

Do you remember? Of course you remember!  
And with me you thank God for this most precious  
gift of life -- the gift of memory.

What would your life or mine be like without  
the gift of memory. Oh sure, there are some  
things in our lives that we would just as soon  
NOT remember -- and some things WE SHOULD NOT  
remember. But how meaningless and unfulfilling  
life would be without remembering.

Just think of the significance of the act  
of remembering in your personal life alone.  
Just recall how good it feels to have a short  
time acquaintance remember your name. Or Tell  
me that you don't appreciate being remembered  
on your birthday or anniversary?!

You and I know only too well how important  
it is to remember to thank someone when they  
have made a contribution of time, talent or  
money. I don't believe that there is any  
greater fear that a pastor lives with -- the  
fear of overlooking someone.

There can be little doubt that the act of  
remembering is one of man's greatest sources  
of affirmation and security. This  
such a reality in the life of Redeemer due  
to our great number of shut-ins. The aloneness  
of a shut-in can really create a sense of  
insecurity and sometimes even worthlessness.  
Just to remember these persons with a call  
or a card so often can be a source of God's  
renewing grace.

I recently visited a member of ours who  
commiserated deeply over the fact that she was  
beginning to lose her memory. I deeply felt  
for her -- there was no easy, pious answer  
that could be offered to erase her fear. Yes,  
the gift of memory from God is a treasured  
possession!

What would our Christian faith be without memory? Without remembering Jesus' ministry of love and compassion, we would have no model for our own. Without remembering Jesus Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, we would have no way of knowing God's purpose and promise for us. Without the ability to remember the EVENTS of our faith, WE HAVE NO FAITH!

OUR FAITH IS BUILT ON THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE REAL EVENTS OF GOD'S PEOPLE AND HIS BELOVED SON. WITHOUT THE GIFT AND POWER OF REMEMBRANCE, OUR FAITH CAN NO LONGER BE SHARED!

We are here tonite IN REMEMBRANCE -- we are gathered to remember a very significant event that occurred on this night centuries ago. The event was a meal. Common elements of bread and wine were shared. And as they were shared that night, Jesus told that gathering of twelve TO AGAIN SHARE THOSE ELEMENTS, IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIM.

And he tells us again tonite TO DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIM! He tells us this because in the act of remembering and doing that event, he becomes present for us RIGHT NOW!

Much in the same way as WE GO THRU THE ACT OF REMEMBERING a special person or event of an earlier time period, we actually relive ~~that~~ crescendo of life. The remembrance of that mountain-top experience can give us renewed purpose for our lives.

As we remember Jesus on that night before he was betrayed BY GATHERING AT HIS TABLE, WE ARE REMINDED OF WHAT HIS LIFE MEANS TO US!

In other words, TO DO THIS--to walk to the Lord's table manifests OUR BELIEF IN THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS. And as Christians we believe that's worth remembering enough to do it over and over again.

We continue TO REMEMBER and DO THIS because we DO NOT WANT to forget Christ or anyone else gathered at the table. It is through this GATHERING AT THE TABLE that we are continually reminded that GOD CANCELS OUR OUR SIN.

And this does make a difference to us, because each of us needs that sin CANCELED. We gather to remember, in order to have the BAD MEMORIES forgotten.

And as HIS POWER CANCELS OUR SIN, he again reminds us - NOW do this is remembrance of me! Yes, God offers us the opportunity TO USE HIS POWER OF CANCELATION in our own relationships.

He offers us the opportunity TO GIRD THE TOWEL -- to clean up our own messy relationships. And we all have them -- whether in the family, at our jobs, in our social organizations, in religious groups, or between races, nations, or leadership here at home. HIS GIFT OF CANCELING POWER offers you and me the ability TO WASH AWAY ONE ANOTHER'S SINS - to make our relationship to God and each other whole again.

There are REAL POSSIBILITIES in this gift of power that God offers, if we care to put it into practice IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIM. Many of us MAY BE content to exist with the messiness in our lives -- others of us may EVEN reject the basin and towel and just continue to TOLERATE THE STENCH IN OUR LIVES.

But as we TRULY EXPERIENCE GOD'S canceling power at his table, it will be NIGH IMPOSSIBLE TO FORGET ABOUT IT AFTER WE LEAVE THAT TABLE. For we believe it is one of the greatest powers to remember -- because we KNOW that it can change a messy past into a cleansed future. Yes, we can't forget it -- because, to forget it would be to make a MOCKERY OF IT.

So let us receive Christ's canceling presence, and then let us INCARNATE his presence -- let us make his presence REAL in our own lives.

Take and eat. Take and drink. Take his real presence -- his power to cancel out sin -- his power to make life new in purpose and meaning -- his power to make your relationships whole and harmonious again -- his power to make you ONE WITH HIM.

Take his real presence, AND MAKE IT YOUR OWN PRESENCE -- YOUR OWN PERSONALITY AND LIFESTYLE, in remembrance of him.

Amen

Sermon - by Pastor Peter R. Martyn  
Maundy Thursday  
Redeemer Lutheran - Milwaukee  
March 30, 1972

"DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

"Do this in remembrance of Mr." (I. Cor. 11:24)

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." (John 13:14-15)

A few weeks ago one of our members asked me in essence: Why are we now having more frequent Communion?

I was tempted to say the easiest yet most accurate response: Because Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." Yet as biblically valid as that response is, it seemed too easy. It didn't seem to convey enough detail. Since Jesus' command said nothing about frequency, I felt compelled to offer further comparative commentary.

So I began to offer thoughts on a subject in which I am no expert, and yet a subject in which I have limited experience - HUNGER. There have been a few times that I have gone without lunch. That's not much of a sacrifice, and yet I know the feeling of hunger around four in the afternoon. There have been a few times that I have been totally alone -- once when I tried to isolate myself from society for one whole week. So I knew then and now the feeling of hunger that comes with being alone - cut off from others.

I am sure that each of you has also known these hungers -- the hunger for food - the hunger for a loving person. Having food and loving people around you really fulfills two of our basic human needs.

But have you ever hungered for forgiveness in the very same way? Has forgiveness ever been one of your basic human needs? I sincerely hope so, because that is a basic hunger that constantly needs fulfillment in the life of every Christian. Because we really believe that we are by nature sinful -- that we are separated from God. And with that awareness, we are sensitive at every moment of our need for God's sacramental food.

We can never receive God's forgiveness too frequently -- we can never take his sacramental food for granted -- his loving gift thru Christ at the altar can never become too commonplace for the Christian, because the Christian knows that just as he is always hungry and in need of food for bodily sustenance, he is equally always hungry for and in need of God's sacramental gift for spiritual sustenance.

So went my response regarding frequency. Yet this leads to another question. Don't we receive God's forgiveness in the same way through the spoken word? Yes, by all means we receive His forgiveness; so why the necessity for the meal of bread and wine? Does God's love become more real in the eating and drinking of this meal?

The church fathers described the symbolism of the Lord's Supper as "physical signs of spiritual realities." What they meant is that the bread and wine as physical signs convey

"Do This In Remembrance of Me." - Page two

and communicate a deeper reality beyond their outward forms.

This can be illustrated as we reflect on the nature of the cross. The cross on the altar is made of certain metals worth so much. In one sense, that gold cross is just so much metal -- just material.

Yet how would we feel if someone were to bend it and stomp on it right now. Many of us would be quite upset. But why? Quite simply, because that physical sign -- that cross -- not only stands for but carries with it an unseen spiritual reality.

Another example. You see tears on the face of a friend. "There is sadness" we say. But where is the sadness? Not in the tears. But when we see the physical sign, the tears, we know the sadness is also there. This is true symbolism -- the physical sign conveys a deeper invisible reality.

The bread stands for Christ's broken body -- the cup stands for Christ's shed blood -- as we encounter those physical signs, Christ is not physically present, but he is really present. The signs communicate the reality of Christ's forgiveness and sacrifice.

We need these physical signs, not because Christ is less present without them, but because they bring Him to real remembrance. They give greater focus and intensity to the presence of Christ -- to His presence of forgiving love.

God our Father knows that we need more than a spoken word -- we need a visible word. God knows that we need the signs of bread and the cup to bring into real remembrance -- to bring into sharp focus and intensity -- what we have sensed in general of the presence of Christ in our lives.

A husband and wife do not wear wedding rings to tell each other that they have a mutual love. Yet when they look at their rings -- those physical signs -- from time to time, the great reality of their love comes flooding in and they are assured and renewed.

The night at the Upper Room and the finished work of Calvary is experienced anew and decisively at each Lord's Supper - in the act of remembering Him. Jesus did more than give His disciples a brief sermon on the night in which he was betrayed -- He took the bread and the cup -- His presence was shared in these physical signs - and he said: "Do this in remembrance of me."

Is that presence really important to share as we gather here? Does the presence of Christ's sacrifice in this meal take on significance for you and me personally? We can only answer these questions for ourselves.

If you and I see ourselves as flawless -- as the self-made man -- as sufficient without the community of God's people - THEN Christ's presence has no significance. Then we join the mob tomorrow yelling CRUCIFY HIM.

"Do This In Remembrance of Me." - Page three

If we've loved God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength -- and our neighbor as ourselves -- then Christ's presence has no significance. Because we've done the job on our own.

If we've sacrificed ourselves totally for the sake of our relatives, friends, family, bosses, associates, etc., then we have saved ourselves, so we hardly need Christ's presence.

**BUT WE KNOW OURSELVES MUCH BETTER.** We are Christians -- so we confess our hypocrisy -- our slander -- our betrayals -- our imperfection -- our disobedience to God and to each other....maybe even to those closest to us. Yes, we know our sin.

So we also know of our need and our hunger for God's real presence in our lives. Jesus said: Do this in remembrance of me. We are here to fulfill our hunger and His loving command tonight. And we know we will need His real presence more than just tonight -- and more than just one certain time during the month. For we betray our Lord far more than just once a month.

"Do this in remembrance of Me."

Can we possibly question the importance of sharing Christ's Body and Blood at any time? That answer is obvious.

But what happens when we receive his presence through the visible word? Does it really make a difference? How do we really remember Him in our daily lives?

The fact is that we often don't remember Him nor what he has offered to us. And so we know that we not only have a need and hunger tonight; we also know that we will soon have a need to return and again share His fulfilling presence. But He offers us direction in the meantime.

He says: "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."

We have been cleansed. The impurities and pollution in our hearts, minds, and actions have been washed away. As our relationship to our God has been cleansed, Christ directs us to cleanse the pollution existing between our friends, our families, yes, even our enemies.

He directs us to gird our towels -- to mop up the mess left from yesterday's sins. That may mean that you and I will have to admit guilt -- to tell someone that we're sorry.

That will mean that we'll have to seek and find the unlovable -- the unacceptable -- the lost or condemned person. For to be accepted and given dignity and worth is real cleansing action.

Girding the towel means giving a sinful brother a second chance -- it means loving someone even when he has failed and betrayed you -- it means giving confidence and forgetting faults -- it means bringing out the best in even the weakest disciple.

"Do This In Remembrance of Me." - Page four

Girding the towel demands a real humility and a real sacrifice. Cleansing up the mess caused by someone else -- caused by someone else's fault -- is not easy or fun.

But it is Christ's way -- and it is the way that we really remember Him.

It is the way that a DEAD, a DISEASED, yes a CRUCIFIED relationship becomes a RESURRECTED one.

Is it worth it? I can't answer that question for you. But Christ has answered it for both you and me.

For he girded the towel with the twelve, and he still does so for the \_\_dozen here. He offered his body to be broken and spilled himself for your sake and mine. We know that His presence is worth it -- because we have come again tonight to gather round his table and to receive His life into our own.

His presence still cleanses me. He makes me a whole new person. He forgets my past. That's worth receiving and sharing -- because that's one of my basic hungers and needs.

If he has so filled your need and mine -- let us do the same for each other -- more frequently -- in remembrance of Him.

Amen.

MAUNDY THURSDAY  
Luth Church of the Master, Troy  
April 11, 1979

"TABLE TALK"

Tonite - we have tried to bring to light that first Maundy Thursday - when Jesus sent two disciples to make arrangements for Him to have the Passover Meal with the Twelve. As was read from Exodus - the Passover Meal was a time for God's family to remember their great deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

As Christians, we have transformed the Passover Meal into the Lord's Supper. But one very important facet of the Supper that has been left out in our communion celebrations is the TABLE TALK. At that first Lord's Supper, there was much conversation. It was Jesus' last time as a fellow human to talk INTIMATELY and DIRECTLY with his closest friends. And so tonite - in a small way, we've tried to recreate that atmosphere. We've tried tonite to make the Last Supper a Meal with Table Talk as well as holy words.

I think it can be most instructive to look more carefully at the nature of the conversation at that table with Jesus. What kind of talk was going on? Please notice one of the things that Jesus himself brings up: He says, "One of you will betray me." That means that at the Lord's Table there was TROUBLED TALK.

Jesus did not follow the general rule of table talk-- that rule says we're not to bring up anything unpleasant at the table. ~~But~~ Without flinching, Jesus in this last moment of intimacy lays it right out there: ONE OF YOU HAS BETRAYED ME.

Without being <sup>morbid</sup> ~~corny~~ about it tonite... I hope we all will deal with Jesus' TROUBLED TALK as it applies to our lives. As part of our being here tonite - we should think about NOT ONLY JUDAS, but how each of us has betrayed

Jesus by not loving Him and our neighbor as he has commanded. How have we let Christ down in our relationships to each other?

Our aim should not be to feel <sup>hopeless</sup> ~~morbid~~ about it - but rather help us to talk to each other about our confessions of betrayal.

Notice also that the TABLE TALK at that first Lord's Supper was **TORMENTED TALK**. In Luke's version of this account, we're told that the disciples began to argue about **WHO WAS GONG TO BE THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM**. Can you imagine how disappointing that must have been to Jesus? He announces that he will be betrayed -- that he will be innocently put to death. And his disciples respond to that by talking about themselves -- by talking about **WHO WOULD BE TH# GREATEST AMONG THEM**.

And Jesus response to them was a powerful one. He didn't use words. He ~~took~~ a towel and a basin -- and he ~~got~~ down on his knees and washed their feet. Jesus could not have been more eloquent. His example was crystal clear. **HE WHO IS GREAT IN HIS KINGDOM IS THE ONE WHO SERVES HIS BROTHER**. He who is great is not the one who worries about status -- but the one who offers loving service!

Let us reflect upon that kind of table talk tonite. As disciples of Christ - our motive for membership and ministry **IS NEVER STATUS OR GREATNESS!** Our motive is always **LOVING SERVICE** to the needs of others, because Christ first loved us!

And finally - that first Maundy Thursday was a nite of Table Talk which can only be described as **TRANSFORMED TALK**. The pettiness of humanity, illustrated by the betrayal and the fighting

over status and position IS TRANSFORMED  
by the healing words of Jesus: Take and eat;  
take and drink. Become new people as you  
take this bread and this wine. Become  
transformed so that you can love one another  
as I have loved you.

And this is the most difficult level of  
Table Talk at our Maundy Thursday Meal of  
remembrance. After we have received the  
bread and wine and the words associated with  
them -- will the world see any difference in  
us? Will the world say: See how those  
Christians love each other!!!!

This is the real level of Table Talk that  
we are shooting for every time we come together  
in His Name -- and especially when we come  
to his table. Our goal is always to let Him  
transform us as we receive his body and blood.

That is our prayer - our Table Talk for  
each other tonite. That we will move beyond  
betrayal -- beyond fighting about who's the  
best or the greatest -- that we will BE  
TRANSFORMED into lovers like Christ.

You see - Christ loves us inspite of our  
betrayals and jockeying for position. His  
hope is that THROUGH OUR TABLE TALK we will  
show one another that we love each other  
as he first loved us.

AMEN

MAUNDY THURSDAY  
Hope Lutheran Church, Toledo  
March 23, 1989 - 7:30 p.m.  
Peter R. Martyn, Pastor

"T H E R I G H T T I M E !"

"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, ... I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Jeremiah 31:33-34

"And when the hour came, he sat at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'" Luke 22:14-16

TIMING is so essential in communicating matters of great importance. If we're not in the right place at the right time ... we often miss out on important messages. The only thing worse is what we've learned in recent air crashes -- that's being in the wrong place and the so called "right time." Both of these situations can result in disaster.

We all know the frustration of "communicating important matters, and then getting no response." Sometimes I think we church leaders think we have a corner on this business ... that's what happens when you live with the illusion that everything you say is divine. But sometimes we do wonder: "DOES ANYONE REALLY CARE ABOUT TIME WITH GOD??" On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of this week -- 10 people crowded into the sanctuary for each day's Holy Week service. You can imagine the difficulty we had in finding room for everyone. On the basis of this response --one might conclude that the members of Hope have only secular interests. But that's hardly the case! It just wasn't THE RIGHT TIME for most of you; but it was THE RIGHT TIME for those 10 people!

I must admit, however, it's getting harder every year for God to get a good hearing in our secular society. Today, so many things have become EQUAL priorities in our lives. Lenten worship at one time was a TOP priority; today it is just another option ... one of many options for already over-extended, exhausted lives. There was a time when a man's job and a woman's domestic duties were God's only competition. Today, esp. with our children, everything seems to have EQUAL TIME status. I look at my own household ... piano, aerobics, tennis, vacations, golf, cheerleading, drama, TV, nintendo -- today these have become EQUALS T GOD'S TIME! It's become harder and harder for God to find THE RIGHT TIME.

Of course, for me, you'll find just the opposite in Holy Week. There's a standard rule in the Martyn household for Peter during Holy Week: "DON'T COMMUNICATE ANYTHING OF IMPORTANCE TO HIM ... HE WON'T REMEMBER IT." This is the week that church leaders become spiritual zombies. I can be smiling at you and

shaking my head "yes," but I'm probably not getting the message. If it doesn't relate to Jesus Christ, the cross, or the empty tomb -- then forget it -- IT'S NOT THE RIGHT TIME.

Yes, timing is so essential in matters of communication. There are so many instances where GOOD NEWS doesn't get through because it was not communicated at THE RIGHT TIME. Holy Week brings to our remembrance the death of Jesus. And death reminds us of funerals. Typically, in our culture, funerals occur about three days after a loved one's death. Very rarely are the bereaved ready to hear the GOOD NEWS of resurrection when they are so deeply feeling the BAD NEWS of physical separation. It's so often JUST NOT THE RIGHT TIME.

As I often taught in my high school speech classes -- it's not just a matter of having a good speaker and great message. It's equally a matter of having a listener who is "hungry" to hear that message ... and an environment which will not negate the transmission of that message.

WELL, the gospel for tonite is an excellent example of all of these communication realities -- it was THE RIGHT TIME for Jesus to share ... and for the disciples to hear. A passover meal was an excellent moment for Jesus to convey his most important message. As we learned from Dr. Powell -- that was not the case before this evening. Three times Jesus attempted to tell his disciples about the ultimate significance of his destiny in Jerusalem. But those were not the RIGHT TIMES. Luke says after those encounters: "the disciples did not understand what he was saying; they did not grasp his meaning." One theologian has really hit it on the nose regarding those occasions -- he says the disciples did not have a "holy hunger" -- a real desire to partake of the fullness of Christ." On those earlier occasions, the disciples were still schoolboys ... just following a unique rabbi ... a religious guru, but not a personal Lord and Savior. It was not yet THE RIGHT TIME!

The reality of the right time is even more vividly seen from Jeremiah 31. Jeremiah was tormented by the spiritual sickness of Israel. God was a faithful lover; Israel had become a disobedient whore. Israel had broken the covenant at the most vital place -- at the heart of her relationship with God. She was worshipping a plurality of gods; she was baking cakes for Ishtar, the pagan mother goddess of the Assyrians; she was practicing the barbarian rite of child sacrifice. And her life in the temple was a sham -- the people were worshipping many gods while they fumbled through the formalities of ritual and temple sacrifice. It was all a show of external religiosity -- there was no hunger for God from the heart.

Israel had betrayed her God. Is it any wonder that Jeremiah mounted the temple steps and offered prophetic condemnation: "Amend your ways and your doings." But it was not yet THE RIGHT

TIME. Oh, people chanted glib words about the temple being "The Holy Place of God," but their practice of idolatry and disease of disobedience clearly reflected a malignant cancer in their hearts. It would be like you or me saying the Apostles Creed or Lord's Prayer to be heard ... but not to be lived or believed.

So when was the RIGHT TIME for God's cure of his people? We know the answer, don't we? When Jerusalem fell to its enemies; when the temple was destroyed; when the people were captured and driven into exile -- then at last, there was a HOLY HUNGER FOR GOD. Obviously - God did not want these things to happen to his people; his will is not destruction and defeat. But when his people are not hungry for his guidance and direction -- then his judgment is that they suffer their own consequences. The words of Jeremiah could now turn from a prediction of doom (which had already happened) to a prophecy of promise:

"I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; not like the one I made with their fathers ... my covenant which they broke ... but I will now write my law upon their hearts. "

As illustrated by both the disciples and the people of Israel - there is only ONE RIGHT TIME for the message of God's merciful grace to get through -- when the recipient has "a hungry heart." Or as the 51st Psalm says, "Create in me a CLEAN HEART, O GOD. A clean, or hungry, heart is not a morally spotless life ... a clean or hungry heart is a life that has been swept clean of cluttered priorities. A clean or hungry heart is a life that has eliminated the junk-food that clogs up the arteries -- it has swept the heart clean of junk food like envy and slander and greed and stubbornness and the other things that cause a bad EKG or death. Like a hungry stomach, a hungry or clean heart cries out to be filled. But not with the world's junk food -- with God's goodness and mercy and love.

For God to have the RIGHT TIME (or any time) IN OUR LIVES - there must be a holy hunger of the heart. God's love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, kindness HAVE NO CHANCE WHATSOEVER if someone comes to this table filled with hatred, greed, jealousy, envy or revenge. That's the junk-food of the world ... those are the PRIORITIES AND POWERS of our secular society. The Passover of Holy Communion is finally God's RIGHT TIME FOR AN OPEN-HEART OPERATION ... it's his resuscitation surgery for a liberated lifestyle from guilt ... his angioplasty for renewed vitality ... his therapy for a new beat to a HUNGRY HEART.

THE RIGHT TIME FOR FORGIVENESS is when we come here  
hungering to be forgiven!!

THE RIGHT TIME FOR GRACE is when we come here hungering to  
be loved by God and desiring to share his love with others.

THE RIGHT TIME FOR MERCY is when we come hungering for help  
and show a willingness to help others who are crying.

Why did Jeremiah's warnings fall on deaf ears - because the people of Judah were not hungry FOR GOOD NEWS. They had stuffed themselves full of spiritual junk-food: narrow nationalism, teachings of false prophets, following after pagan idols, shallow ritualism, and immoral self-indulgence. Every age runs the risk of mistaking spiritual junk-food for real heavenly manna.

When was the RIGHT TIME for the disciples to experience Christ as a personal savior?? There could be only one time -- when they were really hungry for a deeply intimate experience of forgiving love.

When is the RIGHT TIME for you and for me to experience the real presence and the real power of God's love? Dare we insult God by saying that we only have A HOLY HUNGER on the first Sunday of the month?? Dare we betray the power and presence of God by saying that the calendar is what determines our spiritual hunger?? Let us not be too quick to point an accusing finger at Judas; we too who are sitting around this table tonite have betrayed God with our deceitful and controlling practices of his holy sacrament. Like Israel, we too have worshipped our own gods while we fumbled through the ritual of communion.

There is a little bit of Judas in all of us. For like Judas, we have all had our days when we were not hungry for a new covenant with God ... a new relationship of grace ... a new heart of grateful living. We have all been guilty of trying to control God's love by OUR SCHEMES and OUR SCHEDULES ... BY WHAT IS CONVENIENT TO US ... BY WHAT TAKES THE LEAST TIME ... BY WHAT SUITS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF PROPER PIETY.

THE RIGHT TIME for a new covenant with God cannot be fixed by the calendar or any other external control ... it cannot even be fixed by our observance of Maundy Thursday or even Easter Sunday. These are all external realities. God's love will not and cannot be controlled by our calendars or our schedules or our priorities. THE RIGHT TIME FOR GOD'S LOVE IS ANY TIME THAT THERE IS A HOLY HUNGER IN OUR HEARTS.

AND HOPEFULLY - THAT TIME IS RIGHT NOW. Because like 2000 years ago - "the hour has again come ... Jesus is again sitting at table with us ... he earnestly desires to again eat this passover meal with us ... because his kingdom has come again into this world. As he promised, his kingdom comes into our empty hearts each and every time that we gather IN THIS PLACE ... AND AT THE TIME WHEN HE SAYS: TAKE AND EAT ...

THIS IS MY BODY, MY LIFE, MY HEART FOR YOU;  
TAKE AND DRINK ...

THIS IS MY NEW COVENANT POURED OUT FOR YOU  
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

THE RIGHT TIME IS NOW. SO LET'S GO FOR IT!!

AMEN.

*Maundy Thursday*  
*Glenwood Lutheran Church, Toledo*  
*March 27, 1997*  
*Peter R. Martyn, Interim Pastor*

## ***“FINAL WORDS TO THE FAMILY”***

***“Why is this night so different from all other nights?”*** We’ve already heard that question. And if you’ve ever been at a seder, you’ve heard it there too. And we know one important answer from both a Jewish and Christian viewpoint: ***this was the night of the celebration of Passover for Jesus and his disciples. It was the night that every Jew faithfully remembered God’s miraculous act of freedom from slavery in Egypt. Both Jews and Christians hold this REMEMBRANCE in common: we believe in a God who seeks to deliver his people from whatever gets them down ... from whatever prevents them from being the people He wants them to be! And yet - “why is this night so different for us Christians than all other nights?”***

Well -- have you ever remembered the significance of ***“YOUR LAST NIGHT”*** possibly with friends ... or in a community ... or possibly your last night with your spouse or a former lover??? ***“LAST NIGHTS” (or last days) are very different from all other nights. The things that we say to each other or do for each other “ON OUR LAST NIGHTS” tend to be remembered and treasured more than all other things.***

Many times you and I can be a part of a church or civic community for years. But NOT until our ***“LAST NIGHT”*** ***do we finally begin to realize how much that place ... or those people have come to mean to us.*** I’ve often said, ***“How tragic that we often learn the most significant things about another person when that someone is about to leave ... or almost gone ... or sometimes after he/she has gone.”*** It was only after I left Hope that I came to realize how much I missed pastoring ... and how much I deeply valued the community of faith. But I also learned that some Christians were not very trustworthy! ***Burt, we’ve got a lot of preparing to do for your LAST DAY!*** That’s why it’s so important to tell one another ***“I love you”*** each time we leave one other--because that may be the last time! We certainly want our LAST WORDS of love to be remembered rather than our bitter / hostile words.

***Well, that’s what makes Maundy Thursday so “different from all other nights.”*** This was Jesus’ ***“LAST NIGHT”*** with his ***“family”***--his closest friends & associates. The things he said & did on this night should possibly be viewed as his most ***PRECIOUS THOUGHTS & ACTIONS: very probably the things he wanted remembered most -- HIS FINAL WORDS TO HIS FAMILY!***

So let’s briefly look at three of Jesus’ most telling words or actions on his LAST NIGHT. First, he gives a ***WARNING: “You are not all clean!”*** This sentence directed at Judas seems almost like an insignificant final word. But I think it was intended to have application ***TO ALL FOLLOWERS: it was Jesus’ mandate to all followers to be cautious of behavior which would be harmful, destructive or abusive to the Christian community.*** On this NIGHT when children are present for Passover, Jesus says something very important

to all parents: WE ARE A PEOPLE WHO DISTINGUISH RIGHT FROM WRONG ... WE ARE A PEOPLE WHO TEACH & LIVE BY THE TEN COMMANDMENTS! In short, Christians will not tolerate abusive or damaging behavior to one another that violates God's laws of love!

Let me share a less than perfect illustration from an old buddy WHO GAVE A WARNING. Bob was doing his six months of boot camp. After two weeks, the guys in camp decided their was a very foul odor that had invaded the barracks. They determined it was coming from a little guy who had come from the Louisiana bayous. Bathing had not been one of his daily routines. The bully of the barracks had designed a plan that would cut to the heart of this little guy's dignity. He got the barracks to be committed to a "scrub party." That meant the whole barracks would gang up on the little guy ... beat him up ... drag him to the showers ... and scrub him down with wire brushes & lye soap.

As my friend told me ... it never occurred to any of those yahoos to simply ask the little guy to take a bath. But my buddy took the risk of taking the little guy aside and telling him of the plot against him. He suggested that the little guy that night "take a shower in such a way that everybody would notice." So after chow -- the little guy undressed, walked with towel around him through the barracks singing, and took a gloriously long shower whistling the whole time. And from then on, he cleansed himself daily. Well - the barracks' "fun" had been spoiled; but a man's dignity had been saved.

There were three heroes in this story: my buddy, for giving the WARNING. The little guy for taking the advice and not being too proud to follow the advice. But third, Jesus Christ was also the hero -- because it was his spirit of compassion which motivated my friend to offer THE WARNING in the first place. Hurtfulness and exploitation were avoided because one man had the courage to live by the spirit of Christ -- TO WARN ANOTHER PERSON TO CLEAN UP HIS ACT! Tonight Jesus warns his disciples & each of us: CLEAN UP YOUR ACT wherever it is abusing or hurting someone else!!

So this night is very different because Jesus' warns us very directly TO CLEAN UP OUR ACTS! But at the same time he offers the GREATEST ROLE MODEL ever given to the world. In other gospels we're told that a heated argument raged among the disciples as "to who was the greatest!" Can you picture it -- the LAST NIGHT with their Lord and their arguing among themselves; egos went crazy that last night. How could Jesus resolve such brokenness? "He rose from the table; laid garments aside; and girded himself with a towel; then he washed the disciples' feet." Then his final words: "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done for you!"

My friends, what is the greatest chaos among us?? Isn't it the never ending battle of establishing "who's the greatest?" "who's the prettiest?" "who's got the most charm??" Just recently at a fellowship event here at Glenwood I heard some pretty strong words of jealousy because one member

was strutting & carrying on a little too much for another member! Jesus throws all this petty human "one-upsmanship" aside and says: **THERE IS BUT ONE MODEL OF GREATNESS AMONG US: "He or she who is willing to gird the towel and even wash your enemies feet!!"** There are many Christian communities on this very evening having foot washing ceremonies rather than Holy Communion. Some have even suggested this should be our third sacrament. I think both emphases miss the point. Jesus was simply using what was common in his day: foot washing from dusty roads--but humbled himself & became the servant rather than the one being served. **"GREATNESS"** says Jesus "is a willingness to humble yourself and serve whoever is in need."

The modern parallel of foot washing might best be illustrated by Millard Fuller. He became a multi-millionaire at 29. He came home one day to find that his wife had packed and left. He finally found her totally depressed in a New York City hotel. They talked all night. She told him his material wealth and big shot attitude left her cold and empty. They prayed all night. The next day they resolved to give away all they had and begin serving the poor & outcasts. And they asked for God's guidance for their new "Christ-like" journey.

Today, Millard Fuller and his wife lead Habitat for Humanity -- the ecumenical Christian organization dedicated to providing affordable housing for the working poor. Mr. Fuller says: "We don't just build houses. We build people." Like Jesus - Fuller has set an example: To gird the towel and use the basin to serve others rather than be served!!

So, this night is different because we sound the alert to anyone who's behavior is abusive or harmful to others ... and we learn that true "GREATNESS" is being an example of girding the towel as a servant. Finally, this night is different from all others "because on this night, he was betrayed." And even in spite of being betrayed, forsaken, denied, and deserted by his closest friends, he still said to them: "Take and eat, my body given for you; take and drink, this cup shed for the forgiveness of your sins." \*\*\* Could there be any greater FINAL WORDS FOR ANY FAMILY than the words of Jesus Christ.\*\*\* I certainly hope the last words that I share with my family WILL BE WORDS OF JESUS' FORGIVING LOVE. I also hope -- that I will continue to learn to be more forgiving, like Jesus Christ, to those who have betrayed me, forsaken me and maybe even deserted me. But I know one thing for certain -- I will be grateful until my last breath to know that you and I believe in a God who will not leave us or separate his love from us NO MATTER WHAT!!

So that's why this night is so different from all other nights! Because on this night -- and hopefully every other night we gather as people of Glenwood -- these will be THE FINAL WORDS OF OUR FAMILY: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, for no greater love has a man or a woman than to lay down his/her life for their friends!"

AMEN!