

Maundy Thursday
14 April, Anno Domini 2022
Exodus 12:1-14
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation has always come at the cost of blood - life. Blood must be spilled. Life for life. When Adam and Eve suddenly recognized their guilt and their nakedness they tried to just cover over their guilt with leaves. They were trying to simply hide their guilt so no one could see it. They did the same with their excuses - hopefully make it so that God couldn't see the ugliness of their rebellion against Him. But just covering body parts and throwing up red herrings wasn't even remotely sufficient. "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." Death is the cost of sin. Nothing less. If Adam and Eve were to live, something else had to die in their place bearing their guilt. Someone had to take their place. And He would but not yet. Instead, to remind them of the terrible cost of what they had done, God, I would argue, had Adam go and do something yet unheard of in creation - Adam sacrificed an animal to provide a covering for him and his wife. Their clothes were constant reminders of the death they unleashed on creation and the great mercy of God who provided a substitute to spare them the just punishment for their sin.

Sin destroys life. Sin cuts you off from the Lord of life. When you sin - when you give place to any bitter or vengeful thought, when words of mockery and cruelty fall from your lips, when you offer and give approval to crude jokes and coarse language, when your decisions are guided by your own desire for self-promotion - you die. You drive out the Holy Spirit who will not abide with sin. That which is holy will not remain in the presence of that which is unholy. Sin in all its shades and shapes is finally lovelessness and hatred - toward God and toward your neighbor.

Of course you don't like to think of your sin that way. You don't want your anger or jealousy or idolatry or clamoring to be the greatest to be thought of or, worse yet, spoken of, as evil, un-Christian. You want them to be nothing more than honest mistakes or less-than-ideal choices. So you try to just lightly cover them up with excuses and reasons why your sins are not offensive to God and don't actually merit His anger or His judgment.

You try to take shelter behind all the “good” that you’ve done. But, dealing with sin that way only leaves us dead under a pile of rotten leaves.

The shedding of blood, the offering of a life in place of a life, is the one and only way sinful man, the only way you can live again. Your sins MUST be paid for. They must meet their just punishment. If you would be the one to pay the price for your sin then you will suffer the eternal wrath and judgment of God in that place prepared for the devil and his angels. In that place you will be left without even the smallest drop of God’s goodness and mercy. You will get exactly what your sins have merited before God. You will be completely cut off from God.

To escape the furnace of Egyptian slavery, to be redeemed and brought out of that death, to be spared the judgment of God against Egypt’s unbelief and blasphemy, a sacrifice was needed. The call to repentance had been refused. The nine miracles and the mercy that brought relief had been summarily ignored. The long-suffering of God was mistaken for weakness. The blood of Egypt’s firstborn would be spilled. Man and beast alike would taste this bitter death. None would be spared. And, indeed, all deserved this judgment. Egyptian and Israelite together. All had sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. All had despised God’s Word. All had refused the Lord’s servant Moses. All believed God’s divine justice to be child’s play. All should have been struck down by the Angel of Death.

Behold the great mercy of God! An offering was provided, a substitute. A lamb could be sacrificed at twilight, its blood spread on the entrance to the home and its flesh roasted and eaten. The male lamb a year old without blemish in the prime of its youth was provided by God as an acceptable sacrifice. All who received this sacrifice in faith - who took the lamb, who offered the lamb, who painted the lamb’s blood, who ate the lamb with the unleavened bread and bitter herbs looking forward to the Lord’s promised deliverance would be spared death.

It was not simply enough to be an Israelite. It was not enough to give verbal consent to the divine solution. It was not even sufficient to simply sacrifice the lamb. If anyone desired to make the great exodus from death, they must shed the blood, cover the entrance to their home, and eat the lamb. Any who did were spared. The Angel of Death passed over because a death had already occurred in that household - a death of atonement. Any who thought to alter what God had given either by adding

or subtracting to the sacrifice called God a liar and brought judgment upon themselves and their household.

But for all who received this sacrament in faith and who kept the sacrament faithfully according to the Lord's institution, rejoiced to be spared the Lord's righteous anger and to join the solemn procession of freedom out of Egypt with their firstborn and the whole company of God's people.

But those sacrifices had to continue every morning and evening. They were actually not, in and of themselves, adequate substitutes. You are not a lamb or a bull. You are men and women, children of Adam, your first father whose sin brought all men under judgment. The animals were placeholders, reminders that the one true substitute would yet come, the Seed of the Woman, a man who shared in your flesh and blood, who would crush Satan's head.

The Son of God, completely free of the blemish of sin, humbled Himself by making Himself like us, taking the form of a servant. He alone could be our substitute because He was truly one of us and yet other. He alone in His innocence could bear the fullness of God's wrath against sin because He had none Himself. The Lord of Hosts willingly veiled His majesty by covering Himself in our flesh and blood so that He could be sacrificed. He laid aside all claims to innocence and superiority so that He might wash us clean and make us white in His Blood. He who knew no sin became all sin for us so that He might endure the full wrath of God in His own flesh. The Master becomes the servant of the servants so that He might pay the debt His servants owe Him and then pour out rich blessings upon them.

That is what the Holy Supper of Christ's Body and Blood is - all the riches and benefits of Calvary given to you, promising to you that His sacrifice was on your behalf. This is why only faith can receive the Supper. The Supper is God's promise to you that YOUR debt has been paid in full. No judgment now stands against you because of Christ. The Supper is the food of forgiveness, the sweet and blessed fruit of the cross. In the day that you eat of this fruit trusting in the promises of Christ, you will not surely die, but live! One might even say that Jesus died SO THAT He could give you this food.

Sin brought death. But the death of God's chosen Lamb brings you life. That you might be saved, Jesus died that terrible death for you, offering His Body and His Blood as payment for you. Take, eat. Drink of it all of you. Do not doubt. Only believe Christ's promise and receive what He so graciously bestows upon you. Bow your heart and head and knee in great humility that God gives such a gift to sinners. God's Blood is poured out to you this night so that the Angel of Death would pass over you and you might no longer live in terror of God's judgment. As the faithful partake of the sacrifice God has appointed, we join the company of the Holy Christian Church making our exodus out of the Egypt of sin and slavery and journey toward the great and eternal Promised Land for which we long.

In the Name of +Jesus.

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all understanding keeps your hearts and your minds through faith in Christ Jesus.