

Growing up, we almost always had dinner together as a family. No matter what was going on, there was always some attempt to sit down and eat dinner together with no other distractions. This was before any of us had cell phones and we had no TV on in the dining room. Sometimes the meal was rushed or dad would come in late from the office. It wasn't always peaceful, my brother and I sat opposite of each other, so at times there was bickering and some kicking. But no matter what, we always started our meal in prayer, and we had that family fellowship of being together, gathering around food.

With all of the distractions found in today's world, eating together as a family is hard to do. Though in our current situation, I hope that many of you are finding time to eat as a family and set aside the other distractions. This might be a good time to take the opportunity to start new habits like that. A time to be in fellowship as a family.

Maundy Thursday, what we remember today, is centered around a meal. In our gospel text from Matthew, the disciples are gathering with Jesus for the annual celebration of the Passover. A time for the Jewish people to remember what God had done for them in the Exodus from Egypt, how He delivered them from slavery, and His continual presence in their lives. But this specific meal that we also remember as the Last Supper, is going to be different than any other Passover before. In this meal, Jesus is preparing for His death on the cross.

Throughout His entire ministry, Jesus was heading towards the cross. From the very beginning, when sin first entered the world, it was part of God's plan to send His Son, God in the flesh, to be the ultimate sacrifice for all people. As Jesus performed miracles and preached to the crowds, He knew that He would one day die for these very people that He is eating and drinking with. Jesus knew that He would die for the very sinners that He interacted with every day.

Jesus would become the final sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. In our Old Testament lesson from Exodus, we read about the old covenant that God made with His people. The Israelites would make continual sacrifices of animals for forgiveness. The blood of animals was shed for their forgiveness and this was done continually as a foreshadowing of the One who was to come. Now Christ has come to be the final sacrifice of the new covenant with His people.

Jesus became the perfect sacrifice as the Son of God, God Himself in the flesh come down to this earth to die for the sins of all people. At this meal with His disciples, Jesus says, "this is my blood of the covenant." The very blood of Jesus is shed. He became the perfect sacrifice so that He could be with us. This is not the blood of animals, a distant, impersonal, sacrifice. This is Jesus' personal blood, poured out for all people on the cross. This sacrifice isn't just for Israelites, but for the sins of the whole world.

With this new covenant, Jesus has come into our lives. With His words, "this is my body and this is my blood" the real presence of our Lord comes to us in the beautiful gift of communion. The Words of Jesus are powerful and with His Word, Jesus speaks His presence into this meal of His body and blood. In this meal, we receive the forgiveness of sins that Jesus proclaims in this new covenant. Through the body and blood of Jesus, our faith is strengthened and our hope renewed in the promise of our Lord's presence in our lives.

But in these days, we can feel a lack of our Savior's presence. When we cannot gather together as a congregation at Hope to receive the body and blood of Jesus. When we can't sing praises to our

Lord together as a church it can be hard to remember the presence of God in our lives. It can be easy to forget this covenant that Jesus made with His people, a covenant that He has made with you.

Even though we cannot gather together as a congregation, our Lord is still present in your lives. The Words of Jesus that He speaks to you, "this is my blood shed for the forgiveness of your sins" still rings true. The Word of Jesus is His presence in your life. The Words of Jesus is more powerful than any physical separation that we may experience, His Words are more powerful than any sickness or virus that may infect our world. The Word of Jesus takes effect in our lives and He truly is present with you in these times.

As you worship in front of a computer screen Jesus is present with you. As you hear the words of Christ's forgiveness spoken to you, He is there, as you listen to the Word of God read aloud, Jesus is there with you strengthening you in your faith and reminding you of His promise to be with you. As you gather around the dinner table for your own family meals and celebrations, Jesus is still with you, bringing you His gifts of love and grace. Gifts that can bring us comfort and hope, because of the promise that He has made to you as a child of God.

On this Maundy Thursday as we remember the Last Supper, we celebrate what our Lord has done for us. We celebrate Jesus' continual action in our lives. As we wait with great anticipation for the day when we can gather together as a congregation and receive Christ's body and blood, we remember that Jesus died for all people. No matter where we are scattered during this time, the Church is still the body of Christ. The Church is not bound by walls and doors. Christ is still present in our lives, daily working in and through us, bringing His words of forgiveness and love to His Church.

As we deal with phrases like social distancing and separation to save lives, we can face a fearful and scary times. In the midst of these times, we have hope in a Savior that does not abide by social distancing rules. Our Lord is very much social in our lives today. Our Lord does not stay separate from us, but comes right into our fear and anxiety in order to save us from our sins.

Our actively social Savior continues to come to us through His Word. In Scripture we have the very presence of God in our midst. The Savior and His gifts are revealed to us through His powerful Word. Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, comes to His people through Scripture. Our Lord speaks to us through Scripture. In this gift, we truly have the Words of Jesus spoken into our lives. This Jesus speaking His presence in to our lives through the Words that reveal His continual actions.

In the Word of God, we are reminded of what our Lord daily brings to our lives. All of Scripture points to the work of God done for and to us. These are Words of Jesus' love and grace brought to us in the midst of our fears and anxieties. In the midst of our sin, we are reminded of the work of Christ. In Scripture, we read of God coming to sinners, bringing His forgiveness and comfort to them and to us today.

These Words of God hold power and are effective in our lives. They are not just any normal words, Scripture is not just any book. They are God's Words, spoken from His very mouth into the lives of His people. Through these words the presence of our Savior is with us. Through these words our Savior's healing and redemptive work is revealed to us. The presence of Christ is spoken into our lives through the gift of His Word.

As Jesus dined with His disciples and spoke these words of forgiveness, He had you on His mind. He was thinking of you as He journeyed to the cross. His love for you flowed out with His blood that He shed for you. Jesus knew that we would struggle with the sin that we see in this world. At times it can be hard to bear. We can be overwhelmed with all the news that fills our minds. In the midst of this fear, Jesus comes into our hearts. He gives us His body and blood, His presence in our lives that will never be distant.

In a time that we stay separate in order to save lives, Jesus comes to us, He lives within us in order to save our lives. His forgiveness dwells within you to save you from the bondage of sin. As we gather together in our homes, distant yet joined together as the body of Christ, we are strengthened and comforted by the blood that was shed for us.

The personal sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross was for all people. Jesus made that sacrifice so that we would never have to live in separation from our Lord. As you gather together as a family, around your dining tables and in your living rooms, be with your ever-present Lord. Live in the Word of God that speaks His presence into your lives. Find comfort in a Savior who is socially active in your life as He speaks His presence into your life through His powerful life saving Word.