**Forgiveness, Life, and Salvation**

Based on [The Sacrament of the Altar –](http://catechism.cph.org/en/sacrament-of-the-altar.html)

[Luther’s Small Catechism](http://catechism.cph.org/en/sacrament-of-the-altar.html)

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Holy (Maundy) Thursday

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In the scriptures, Maundy Thursday is referred to as “The night when Jesus was betrayed.” The evil that brought about Jesus’ death looms large this evening. **Sinful men devised a plot to stop Jesus, because people were following him, believing in Him, and the whole world was going after him.** The Jewish ruling council was worried that they would lose their control over the nation. Judas was a lover of money and a thief (John 12:6), and sold out his Lord for thirty-pieces of silver. Not only this, but the rest of Jesus’ disciples abandoned Jesus to suffer alone.

This plot was devised and the trap was sprung, his disciples fled and Jesus was led away. This happened

not by flesh and blood alone--but by those carried along by the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. It was an evil night, where the evil one, the tempter, the devil had his day; working in the hearts and minds, the fears and the folly of sinful men.

The betrayal and the sin and the evil that was put on display that night is still at work in the world. Satan is still at work to tempt us to do evil. He tempts us to sin, and when we give in to temptation, he is quick to accuse us. **But God has a greater plan for his people and their defense against the devil. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus instituted his last will and testament for his disciples.** He took bread and wine and gave them as his body and blood. These are gifts that keep you in his grace and protect you from the devil’s work.

First, the Lord’s Supper gives us the forgiveness of sins. It is God’s will that you do not sin. But when you do sin, you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ. **He gives his body and blood, under bread and wine, to cover your sins, take away your guilt.** Satan is a liar and an accuser; but a fact is a fact. When you eat the Lord’s body and drink his blood for forgiveness, you have forgiveness.

Second, the Lord’s Supper gives life. In this Sacrament he gives you His Holy Spirit, who is the Lord and giver of life. He comforts you in all trials and afflictions. Standing alone, y**ou cannot overcome the devil, but the Holy Spirit who is in you is greater than the devil**. When he tempts you we can resist; when he accuses you, you can rebuke him, repent of your sins and return to the Lord knowing he is eager to forgive, and to give new life through the working of His Spirit in you.

Finally, the Lord’s Supper gives salvation, that is sanctuary and safety with God. **God does not mean to be our enemy. In this meal, He does not come in wrath to destroy us. He comes to us in peace to save us.** Stained with sin we tremble to stand in his presence. But God will never despise a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17). He prepares a table for us, in the presence of our enemies. He prepares a table for us here and now, so that we have a place to go for salvation, a sanctuary here on earth in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Forgiveness, life and salvation these are the gifts of God through Christ Jesus, who gave his life for the life of the world. It was for thirty pieces of silver he was betrayed; but it was not with gold or silver that we were redeemed, but by his holy precious blood and innocent sufferings and death. And as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes again to cast his enemies into the supherous sea and bring us to the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end.