**The First Supper**

Based on [John 13:1-35](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn13.1-35)

Preached on April 9, 2020

Holy (Maundy) Thursday ~ Mandatum

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This Sermon is based on the Gospel reading from John 13, this verse in particular “*Peter said to Jesus, ‘You shall never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.’*” (v. 8)

It is amazing how well the selected readings for Service, appointed centuries ago, seem to lend themselves to what’s going on in the world right now. The OT is about the tenth plague against the Egyptians and Passover. God says ”I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of egypt.” For us, there is a virus pandemic, and it is a virus that can lead to death. But like God’s people in Egypt, we who have been covered in the blood of the lamb of God are protected. No plague, or virus can take from us the eternal life that we have in Jesus Christ. So today, as in former days, God’s people are protected by blood.

We received the protecting blood of Jesus when we first heard his word and believed, as he has said “***My Words are Spirit and they are Life***”. We were washed in his blood when we were baptized in his Name, even as in washing the disciples feet he says “***If I do not wash you, you have no share with me****”.* And we are nourished by his blood when we drink it together in the Holy Communion of His Holy Church, as he has said “***Drink it all of you, this is my blood poured out for you for the forgiveness of all of your sins.***”

Holy Thursday is the day we commemorate this institution of the Lord’s Supper. This event has been called “The Last Supper”, dating back at least to the time when Leonardo DaVinci gave that title to his famous painting. But it is not what the church calls it. Rather than call it “The Last Supper”, we call it “The First Supper”. Our Lutheran Confessions call it the “First Supper”. Because Jesus gives assurance that this will not be his Last Supper. He says that he *will certainly* sup with them again.

Jesus said to his disciples on that very night, “I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine, until the day I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” You see, Jesus is not simply enjoying his last meal before execution. He is setting up the first of many meals by which he will dine with his disciples in the future.

The Lord’s Supper is not just a commemoration of the so-called “The Last Supper.” The Lord’s Supper is the way Jesus set up for us to sup with him until he comes again. Maybe we could call Holy Thursday Jesus’ Last Passover, but it is certainly his First Communion. Jesus arranged “The First Supper” as an example by which many more suppers would follow.

Since that day, there have been countless Suppers carried out according to Christ’s command. It is the climax of all Christian Worship...Supping with Christ and on His Body and Blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. It is a pity that we are not able to gather and Commune together as a congregation. Christ wants us to commune together, and he gives His flesh and blood in it for our benefit. However, it appears that with this virus, God has instituted a fast from his Supper. This is so that we may increase our hunger for it, and feast with joy once the fast is lifted.

Jesus celebrated the First Supper so that his disciples would be assured that he would be with them for many to follow. He gives his flesh and blood under bread and wine because his flesh gives life. His flesh is God’s flesh, His blood is God’s blood. And this is what this means for us. In the Garden of Eden, there was a tree of life. Likewise, the flesh of Jesus Christ, our saviour is for us the fruit of the tree of eternal life. We return to his flesh often to sustain us in the life he has prepared for us here in the world. Just as God is life, God’s flesh a life-giving flesh and a life-giving blood, a medicine and vaccination of immortality. Those who receive it recieve God himself, and all He is. This is a deep mystery, and it is what we confess.

If Holy Thursday recalls the “First Supper” then what is the Last Supper? It hasn’t happened yet, but there will be a Last Supper. The Last Supper is not the last time we commune together before Christ comes again. No, the Last Supper will be “The Marriage Feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom.” It is too great a mystery for us to comprehend, but somehow when Christ comes again to restore all things on the last day, and when our bodies are raised from the dead and clothed in immortality and incorruptibility, then Jesus will hold a Supper. It is the Last Supper, but it is a supper that will have no end.

It is the Last Supper in the sense that Jesus’ second coming will be his Last coming...because this time he will stay in all his glory revealed before all the world to be the Lord and King of all Creation. It is his Last Coming, but he will never leave again. So too, our receiving forgiveness, life and salvation in the Last Supper where heaven is restored to earth will have no end.

On Holy Thursday, Jesus shared The First Supper with his disciples. In the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, in the church, we continue to Sup with him, because it is through the real presence of His true flesh and blood that we enter into this blessed communion. Now we receive only a foretaste of the feast to come. But when the Last Supper finally comes, the marriage feast of the Lamb, we will fully enjoy the majesty of our God and dwell in the house of the Lord forever.