

September 13th, 2009 Part 1 of 3
The Last Will and Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ:
The Real Presence

NIV Mark 14:22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." 23 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from the Son of God, who gave us his very own body and blood for our salvation. Fellow brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ by his body and blood given and shed for you on the cross. In lieu of the fact that St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church will be offering the Lord's Supper on the second and last Sunday of every month beginning in October, the leaders thought it would be wise to review the great blessings of the Lord's Supper. Today we focus on just what exactly is the Lord's Supper: The Real Presence.

Do you have your will completed and in a secure spot? Doling out and dispersing your possessions is not easy or something we think much about, but it is necessary. Even if we only have a handful of possessions, we can offer our loved ones comfort and encouragement with a confession of our faith in Jesus and our hope of seeing them all again in heaven as followers of Jesus our Savior. For example, I'm a proud owner now of an antique pump organ. It was my grandmother-in-law's pump organ. It is now a keepsake. It reminds us of her and helps us to remember her life as a Christian woman. On the very last night that Jesus would have time to talk with his disciples before he would be executed at the hands of the Roman soldiers for the sins of the world, He turned to His disciples and gave them a powerful keepsake. He gave them something that summed up perfectly what His life was all about from birth to death – His body and blood given and shed for the sins of the world. A powerful keepsake the world has never seen before or ever will have anything to compare it too – He gave His disciples His last will and testament: The Lord's Supper, His body and Blood in, with, and under bread and wine – the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Our Lord and Savior.

Sadly, I have often heard of people dying without a will. My friend in San Antonio told me of the horror she endured watching her family argue and fight over the possessions of her father.

Without a will, the family is left to conjectures, feelings, and guesses as to what the deceased family member would have wanted. With a will however, the family is given encouragement and confidence as to the desires of their loved one. In fact they are bound by law to follow the directives given in the words of the last will and testament. The family is not allowed to depart from the words written in the will, without penalty and punishment. The law does not allow survivors to go on conjecture or their own interpretation or feelings as to what the will says or means. The meaning of the will is bound to the words used. For my wife and I then, the hard part of writing the will was making sure it was worded correctly so there would not be any arguments or openings for interpretations.

How much more so then should we not adhere to the meanings of the words Jesus chose to use in His last will and testament given to His disciples on the night he was betrayed into the hands of the Roman soldiers to be executed for the sins of the world. Well meaning Christians have asked me, "Pastor why do you make such a big deal out of the Lord's Supper and its meaning? Each church has its own interpretation so we are just arguing over things that aren't important." Don't let anyone fool you into thinking that the differences in the Lord's Supper from the Roman Catholic "transubstantiation" to the reformed churches "representation" and the Bible teaching of "the real presence" is over church opinions. This argument is about the very words of the Son of God, Our Lord and Savior, who was born, lived, died and rose from the dead for each of us miserable sinners.

Today we look at the words of the Lord's Supper found in Mark's account. The gospel writer Mark was not in the upper room on the night Jesus was betrayed. Mark was not one of the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ. Mark was a disciple of the apostles. According to some historical writings from the early church, Mark was a close companion of Peter,

one of the apostles. Matthew, one of the apostles there present, wrote his account of Jesus words as he spoke. Mark was taught by the apostles and had ample time to add and explain what those words meant found in Matthew's account. We might expect a lengthier paragraph explaining what Jesus meant by "Take eat this is my body" "this is my blood." Yet what do we find in Mark's account? He does not add any explanation to Jesus simple yet powerful words. Quite the opposite, as if he was counting the very syllables of the words he repeats Jesus words in Greek verbatim. "Take eat this is my body." I really appreciate the style of writing found in Mark's gospel. Mark wrote his account for the gentile world, and in particular to point the reader to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Mark's gospel is the shortest but leaves you out of breath as he jumps from one miracle to the next, one display of Jesus power to the next. And the account of the Lord's institution of Holy Communion is no exception.

Mark chooses to use the Greek word "to bless" before Jesus breaks the bread and offers it to his disciples. It is the same word he used to describe what Jesus did with the 5 loaves and two fish that fed 5000 men not to mention women and children. Jesus wasn't just saying "Thanks for the food, God." He was using his power to change this simple bread and wine into miraculous feeding for his disciples. Mark does add some explanation as well to what the disciples did when Jesus offered them his body and blood with the bread and wine. He adds that the disciples did just that, they took and drank. Why the explanation? Even today some people still throw around the idea that Jesus isn't talking about really eating and drinking his body and blood. Mark helps us to see clearly, "Yes it is a real eating and drinking that Jesus wanted his disciples to do in this supper." Jesus literally meant for them to eat and drink and they literally did do just that. The disciples drank the wine that Jesus said, "This is my blood". The disciples actually ate the bread that Jesus said, "This is my body."

I am grateful for Mark's account because it is no different than Matthew's account as he recorded the very words of Jesus in this supper. The words of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper are found 4 times in the scriptures and in each case they are found in their simple context, straightforward with no extra paragraphs of explanation. It is a eye

opening, bucket of cold water in the face of our doubts and unbelief. This is my body; this is my blood. I've heard people say, "See they all say the same thing, how can we ever know what they mean? It's like just one passage, not 4." Have you never repeated the same thing over and over again because there is no simpler or easier way to say something to explain it? How much easier can it be than, "This is my body and blood given and shed for you." That we have these simple yet powerful words recorded not once but 4 times in the Holy Word of God is a security lock for us to its meaning. It in no way does the opposite and casts doubt. Paul said the same thing about reiterating simple truths to solidify the truth.

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

In cases of doubt, with a will the court of law will insist on the simple meaning of the deceased's words. The law will not allow anyone to depart from the meaning of those simple words. No outside interpretation is allowed. The words are to be given the greatest detail. If the deceased wanted something else done after his death, he would have said so! And that goes for the words of mortal men! How much should we stick and respect the simple meaning of the words of the very Son of God who lived and died for us. Peter reminds us that no private interpretations are allowed when it comes to God's Word. Leave your original thinking and dreamed up altered worlds to the storytellers!

2 Peter 1:20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

I am disgusted with the disrespect for God's Word in the Lord's Supper among followers of Jesus Christ today. I also am disgusted with myself for not respecting the truth of Jesus Words that the very blood and body of Jesus is found in with and under the bread and wine for the assurance of my forgiveness. We cannot get rid of the war the devil is waging all around us and within us to get us away from the simple yet powerful words of our Lord Jesus. But we must remember to fight and that the fight for the teachings of the real presence of Jesus body and blood in the Lord's Supper is not just about some old guys fighting over some old church teachings with little impact on life and

inconsequential. The real presence of Jesus body and Blood is dealing with the very words of our Lord and Savior, the very Son of God in heaven and the very forgiveness of sins that we need to escape death. But since they are His words, we know that they are dependable and they are life to us poor sinners. Every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper we come into contact with the very body and blood of Jesus Christ. With reverence, honor and the ultimate respect we come to this table. We come into the presence of the Lord's true body and blood by faith alone in His Word. We must be very careful to hold to the words of Jesus Christ that He spoke on the very night He was betrayed into the hands of the Romans who would be an unwitting pawn to sacrifice the lamb of God for the sins of the world. Next week we look closely at the Real Blessings we receive in the Lord's Supper.