

Rev. Kurt Cockran, Risen Savior Lutheran Church (Basehor, KS), C – Maundy Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### Holy Places: Plural

Luke 22:7-20

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

**“This cup...is the new covenant in my blood.”** To have a new covenant, you need an old covenant. God has always, from eternity, been one God in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From eternity, God has always saved by grace through faith in the means of grace. In the Old Testament He saved by grace through faith, giving the gift of His favor through the sacrament of circumcision and the sacrament of the blood of animals that pointed forward to the shedding of the blood of the Son of God. In the New Testament, He saved by grace through faith by the washing of water and the self-giving/self-feeding of His own body and blood that flowed from the cross. Two testaments. One God. Always saving by grace through faith. The seed of Eve will crush the devil. Period. God will do it. This is an *unconditional* covenant. No work required for man. It required everything of God. He would provide the solution to the mess *we* made of ourselves, the mess *we* make of this world. With the promise to Abraham too. God will give the land. God will give the children. God will give the messiah to the whole world through those children in that land. The only thing God wished of His people was simply *faith*, that God would declare this promise of redemption, and the descendants would respond with their “Amen. Thank you.”

And yet, Abraham longed to see our day, the day where we can look back on Christ. Hebrews lays it out simply: the New Covenant is...simply...better. It’s also better because by the time that Jesus rolls around history, the Old Covenant had become broke. Not by God, but by man. God through Jeremiah tells us this is **“the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that**

**they broke, though I was their husband.**” Idolatry upon idolatry after warning upon warning swept away the northern kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BC, and the southern kingdom of Judah exiled to Babylon in 586 BC. The Jews who then returned from Babylon were optimistic...they had been given another chance! Could we become a faithful people unto God again? But even after the second temple was built, there remained no ark. The glory presence of the Lord had not yet come back...at least yet. A certain 40 day old baby would eventually fulfill *that* prophecy.

But by the time the final prophet ceased speaking, Malachi, the priesthood had become corrupt, worship frivolous, divorce widespread, tithing neglected. And then...silence. For 400 years, God ceased to speak, which was always the worst of disciplines God threatened and too often had to carry out. The silent treatment from the Father. While God remained silent, history didn't stop, as things only got worse in the centuries leading up to Jesus. The intertestamental period had its ups, but it certainly had its downs. The Scriptures became contraband; illegal by decree. Circumcision was granted the death penalty, which to them would mean the same as for us if the President signed an executive order that baptisms are now illegal in America. As if that weren't bad enough, a statue of Zeus was lifted in the temple, and to top it all off, an unclean pig sacrificed on the altar. There was a small reformation, remembered today by the holiday of Hanukah. But come the final decades before Jesus was born, the politics looked bleak. The Roman Senate in the year 40 BC declared Herod “King of the Jews,” which would inspire a certain mob to one day proclaim, “We have no king but Caesar.”

The Old Covenant had had its day. But it was done for. Beyond repair. And thanks be to God for what He had in store. A new covenant. **<long pause>** And this was the eventual covenant God had in mind all along. It's not that the Old Covenant was plan A and the New

Covenant plan B. In fact, if anything, it would be the other way around. The New Covenant, Jesus, was always plan A. The Old Covenant was in preparation of the New. Paul in Galatians gives us the image of a school tutor working with a young student. The old covenant is the tutor, and the young student is the whole of God's people. Before God's people are ready for the fullness of adulthood, they must learn the school of hard knocks, that they can't earn their way to heaven, but need to be humbled and guided in the forgiveness of sins. If there's one thing that the Old Covenant exposed after enough time, it was our inability to please God by our own works, no matter how hard we try. The Mosaic aspect of the Old covenant was instituted at the foot of Mt. Sinai when the people with one voice declared, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And they were everything but obedient. They needed to learn this. *We* need to learn this. We cannot please God by our own works.

**"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."** At the right time, Jesus, the Seed of Eve, the offspring of Abraham, the Lion of Judah, the New Moses, the Son of David, fulfilled that unconditional Abrahamic covenant *by* perfectly upholding every jot and tittle of the Mosaic covenant. He did this so that He could be and would be the one to take the bread of the Passover and say **"this is my body."** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying **"This is the new covenant in my blood."** Fulfilling the Old, He instituted the New. Not by the shedding of the blood of animals, but the shedding of His own blood, the blood of God. This blood not offered time after time, but shed once and for all. Shed not to cover a certain people for a certain time, but to forgive all sins of all people for all time, from beginning to end, from the least to the greatest. *All done by Jesus.* Truly, a one-sided covenant. It is finished.

And again, this was planned. From the foundation of the world, as God saw our lowly state and how pitifully we would do under the yoke of Moses, He set His plan in motion. He presented His last will and testament in the Upper Room, and it took effect upon the death of the one giving the inheritance: the kingdom of heaven.

And He gives this to you. “Do this often,” He says, and so we gladly do, to receive the forgiveness of sins.

Our Epistle text said, **“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.”**

There’s one little letter in that verse that makes all the difference between the old and the new covenants. **“since we have confidence to enter the holy *places*.”** Places... Plural! In the Old Covenant, there was only one holy place, only one temple, one ark, one altar, only one city where God promised to be that God told everyone to travel to. But now, with the New Testament in Christ’s *ascended* blood, there’s not just one holy place, but many holy *places*. Every Christian church where His words are spoken purely and His sacrament administered rightly, that’s where the true Passover Lamb of God comes to you. That’s where Jerusalem is brought to you. We no longer need the land of Israel. We no longer need Jerusalem. We no longer need the Passover. The temple in Jerusalem remains in ruins for our good. The Kingdom of Heaven comes to you here, to give you the forgiveness of your sins. Amen.