Thanksgiving
"Thanking God for the Eucharist"
Matthew 26:26-30
November 24, 2026
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text on this eve of Thanksgiving is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 26:26-30

"26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."
27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."
30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

So far our text:
Jesus gave thanks. The word that He use is a Greek form of the word we have in English – Eucharist. Jesus gave thanks to God for this moment that He was now instituting this New Testament Sacrament for His Church – the Sacrament of the Altar, also known as the Eucharist, Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper.

The food preparations for this meal had been made…unleavened bread, the roasted lamb, the fruit of the vine, wine. This meal also used bitter herbs as a remembrance of how the Israelites were in bitter captivity under the Egyptians. The meal pointed the disciples into the past. It made them take the time to remember how God had delivered them from captivity and to give thanks!

Yes, central to the meal was the Passover lamb that was slain by the priests in the temple earlier in the day and now roasted. The Passover lamb reminded the disciples of how its blood of the lamb on the doorposts had protected the eldest sons of the Israelites when the angel of death passed over their home. But in the Egyptians homes who did not have the blood of the lamb on their doorposts there was much wailing and sadness as the eldest son was killed.

The Passover meal pointed them to the past but it also pointed them to the present and to the future. For the same God who helped them, continues to help, care and provide for them. And most especially, the Passover Lamb pointed them to the coming Messiah, the Lamb of God who would shed His blood to deliver all humanity from the captivity of sin, death and the devil.

The Feast of the unleavened bread, another name for the Passover reminded the disciples that their forefathers had to leave Egypt in urgency and didn't have time to let the bread rise. They had to trust in the commands of God.

Unleavened bread would receive new symbolism in the New Testament church. For Paul told the Corinthians these commands of God:
"Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Indeed, we all gather this evening because we have a great need to have the old leaven of our sinful words, thoughts and deeds to be purged. We can't purge them ourselves. But we look to the Passover Lamb Jesus Christ, our Passover, who sacrificed Himself for us. And we give thanks!

As Jesus prepared and celebrated this last Passover meal, He knew that the time of His sacrifice for the sins of the world was imminent. He gave His disciples instructions on where to find the place where they would celebrate the Passover.
"Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples." ' " (Matthew 26:18)

And during the meal, Jesus plainly tells His disciples that one of them was going to betray Him.
"20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. 21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." 22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" 23 He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. 24 The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he

had not been born."25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."

Yes, as Jesus dipped the bread into the bitter broth, the hand that would betray Him dipped with Him. Shortly Jesus would experience the bitterness of betrayal, the bitterness of false accusations, the bitterness of being rejected by all even His Father in order to deliver the world from its slavery of sin. Jesus would bitterly shed His blood unto death.

And so Jesus does something extraordinary with all this happening as a backdrop. Something the absolute opposite of being bitter – He gives thanks. He blesses the bread. And gives it new meaning to His New Testament church. For the bitterness of sin that His people daily experience, Jesus takes simple bread and gives it to His believers in Him and with these words. "Take eat. This is My body". My sacrificed body freed you from your sin!

As you examine yourself, what bitterness of sin plagues your soul? The bitterness of the evilness of this world? The bitterness of your sins, betrayals, hardness of heart, and lack of thankfulness to God? The bitterness of broken relationships, broken promises, broken bodies, the bitterness of death? Jesus' body was broken for you. His blood was shed for you. And with a repentant heart, receive complete forgiveness. Receive Jesus' love for you and give thanks!

Jesus doesn't say this represents My body. He says, "This is My body". This…in with and under the bread… is My body. His body is really present in a most mysterious and sacramental way for the believer to eat. And this body, as Luke recounts, **"is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." (Luke 22:19)** Jesus' body was really sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the world and this very body He graciously gives to you in with and under the bread.

It was given for you on the cross, broken for you on the cross as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11. Already Jesus foresees His giving of His body, His life for your deliverance, for your salvation.

And now, Jesus gives thanks again. Eucharist. Knowing what He must face, He gives thanks that He can give this gift of forgiveness to His church – this cup of the new Testament.

Jesus used the 3rd cup of the Passover meal to institute a new sacrament. The 3rd cup was called the cup of thanksgiving, thanksgiving for the Israelites deliverance from slavery. And now Jesus gives this cup new meaning. For it becomes a new deliverance. It is not just wine, but in with and under the wine is Jesus' blood.

"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

What do we receive in with and under the wine? The very blood of Jesus. This is My blood. He doesn't say this represents My blood. And Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 also reminds us of this communion of bread and body, of wine and blood…both and…a union.

"I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread."

So many Christians celebrate the Eucharists and yet what are they giving thanks for? Many believe that they are not receiving a gift to give thanks for, but are making an unbloody sacrifice for sins. If it is man's work, what is there to give thanks to God for? Nothing!

Other Christians don't believe they are really receiving the Lord's body and blood. Again, Why give thanks for something that you aren't even receiving? But the true Christian church in which the LCMS teaches and confesses receives Jesus' words as He intended them to be, a gift, a gift of forgiveness. And for that reason, Jesus Himself gives thanks, Eucharist and Bible believing Lutherans do as well.

As wise men and women on this eve of Thanksgiving, we have much to thank God for! As Jesus thanked God for the few fish and loaves of bread when He miraculously fed 4000 and 5000 people, so we thank God for our daily bread, all that we have that God gives us to sustain our bodies and lives. If we should not give thanks, we would become arrogant and self-centered as if it is by our own strength and means that we have the house, home, family, clothes, food, cattle, goods, etc. But we humbly thank God as the Giver of all good gifts.

As Jesus thanked His Father before He raised Lazarus from the dead, so we thank God that through Jesus' death and resurrection we have the assurance of our resurrection on that last day. So Jesus said in John 11, **"And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."**

We thank God for the gift of faith to believe that in Jesus, the sent One, and that in our baptism we are united with Him in His death and resurrection!

And as Jesus thanked God for the institution of the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, we thank God this evening and as often as we receive this means of grace that Jesus gives to us personally His very body and blood for our forgiveness!

"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever… The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. 23 This was the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:1,23,24) Amen

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)