

Matthew 26:26-28

“What An Invitation!”

04/2/15

Maundy Thursday

Grace, Mercy, Peace, and Forgiveness are yours from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Have you ever received an invitation to a special gala which just couldn't be refused? Do you remember being invited on your first date with a dream? Do you remember an invitation to see a special sporting event? i.e. “March Madness” game, NCAA Finals, Super Bowl, Masters, Indy 500. Have you ever been invited to a special concert? i.e. Beatles, American Idol finals. Surely, there is something you would give anything to go and see or be a part of, right?

What happened when you received the invitation? Did you have something conflicting with the event? What did you do? Did you just say, “Oh, well, maybe some other time...?” You probably thought, **“there may never be another opportunity like this, so you immediately did everything in your power to make it happen.”**

Perhaps you had another invitation that was conflicting that was not so grand? Perhaps you had a church meeting, or an office meeting, or you were in school or would be working at that specific time? What did you do? What would you do?

While in college I was given an invitation to go to New Orleans to spend a couple days on a shrimp boat and go fishing out by the oil rigs in the Gulf. Only problem I had classes on Friday and there was a test to be taken. No problem, I went to the Professor and he saw things my way and arrangements were made so I could go. That was minor but I made it happen.

While in Winston, at St. John's, I had the privilege and honor to confirm and baptize an adult. This person later went to the seminary and became a pastor. I was given the invitation to preach his ordination and installation. All arrangements were

made so I could attend and participate. A few months ago a daughter and her husband invited Margi and me to go to Florida with them to see a Dolphins game. You bet we arranged things so we could go.

Two thousands years ago an invitation was given of far greater importance. Turn to your Bibles to Matthew 26:26-28 (page 832): Jesus, on the night in which He was betrayed, **“took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”** The Greek word “Labete [λάβετε/take]” is a command. In essence Jesus was saying, “Come on, take hold of this, grab this, receive this.” Jesus was holding the broken bread that He had blessed and said, **“I offer this gift, I offer this to you, eat of it, this is My body.”** Then Jesus took the cup, and when He had blessed it, He held it out to the disciples and said, “Drink of it, all of you...”

Do you think the disciples would say, **“no way!”** Not a chance in the world! Not only was it a command, but more importantly, **it was an invitation** by their Master to receive something special. Do you think, at that time, they understood exactly what Jesus was giving them? Maybe Jesus explained a little more. But, this we know, Jesus said, **“*This is My Body... This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*”** Jesus was completing the covenant (Exodus 24:8) made to Moses and Israel concerning the blood of the Lamb that would protect Israel. They were receiving a foretaste and a foreshadowing of what was to come. The blood of the Lamb that would be given so that death would Passover them.

If you had been the disciples that night, **would you have refused Jesus' offer** or invitation to partake of that special meal: The Last Supper – The receiving of His body and blood? ***How many of you would have refused*** Jesus, raise your hands? My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that offer, that invitation to take hold of, to receive, His very body and blood, in, under, and with the bread and wine is extended to you every time the Lord's Supper is offered. Tonight/today you will be invited to receive Jesus' body and blood, broken and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. What will you do? Every other week Jesus invites you to His Supper. What do you do? At the end of May, beginning of June, you will be invited to receive the Lord's Supper four Sundays in a row: Third Sunday (Normal), Fourth Sunday (Pentecost), the fifth Sunday (Trinity (Sunday), and the First Sunday (Normal). What will you do? I may be preaching to the choir? You will take it because you do. But, some will think that is just too much or too often, I think?

What I fear most, not so much that some will not partake of it, but that you do not think about what you are receiving??? I fear you will just go through the actions because it is something you have done hundreds/thousands of times before? Am I wrong? Every time you come forward and partake of the "Lord's Supper", "Communion", "Sacrament of the Altar", and "Eucharist", as it is known, you are receiving Jesus' very body and blood. No, you don't see it. No, you don't taste it. No, you are NOT "cannibalistic" as I heard someone once say on the radio of those who believe in the "Real Presence". It is a mystery and it is a miracle. Something Jesus is quite capable of performing. With this Supper you receive the Holy Spirit, thus the strengthening of your faith and the forgiveness of sins. I pray you think and receive His

Body and Blood, with the bread and wine, and that you realize His presence with you, and the forgiveness He's given you.

St. Paul records Jesus saying, **“This is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”** The Lord's Supper is a “memorial feast”, but it is also a “Sacramental Feast.” Every time you partake of it you should remember what Jesus has done for you: He submitted His body to torture and let His blood flow from His body as He was crucified for the payment of the sins of the world. But, the feast, is much more than a memorial feast! It's a gift of His presence with you.

Have you received an inheritance from a parent or family member? Every time I look at this ring, or this cross, I am reminded of my father as they were his, but more than just reminders of His love they are Dad presence in a special way. The night in which Jesus was betrayed, and before He died, He left us a great reminder of Himself: His body and blood as a special gift. This gift of His presence, His body and blood, is offered you every time you receive His invitation to His Supper.

What a gift! What an invitation! There is NONE better! Will you do everything in your power to accept the invitation and contemplate what you actually receive? You cannot go wrong! It comes with blessings! Each time you receive this feast you could say, **“Thank You, Lord, for this invitation! Thank You, Lord, for this gift! *Thank You*, Lord, for Your body and blood! Thank You, Lord, for Your forgiveness! I accept!”** Let it be so! Amen!