



Holy Thursday: The Cup of the New Covenant | Matthew 26:20-29

Call to Worship:

Jesus, thank you. Thank you for giving us a new command – that we love one another.

Thank you for showing us how to love by sitting at the table with your betrayer, Judas.

Thank you for forgiving us, loving us, and pouring yourself out so that we can be with you forever.

Forgive us for being like Judas at times in our own lives. Forgive us for trading your presence for the things of this world.

We praise you, Jesus, for showing us how to walk through the valley of the shadow of death by your power and grace.

We praise you, Jesus, for preparing tables in the presence of our enemies.

Give us the grace, power, and strength each day to follow where you lead serving others – especially our enemies – with love and humility like you did.

Unison Prayer: Lord, on this day (night), take us back to that table where you fed your disciples one last time. Astound us with a new covenant – a new promise – that changes everything. Make the familiar new for us again in the receiving of the bread and the cup, as in them you are mysteriously, yet truly, present to us. It is in your name we pray. Amen.

Message: Introduction: Holy Thursday is a celebration of when Jesus gave us “the cup of the new covenant,” Holy Communion. From an outside perspective, Communion can seem very weird and always has (the early church was persecuted for being “cannibals” because they “ate the body” and “drank the blood” of Jesus). As we celebrate this “weird” new covenant, looking at its context can help us understand it and its rich layers of meaning better.

Main Points:

1. Jesus and his disciples were having their last meal together before his execution in the middle of the Passover feast. Revisit the story behind the Passover (Exodus 12) and the meaning of its continued celebration. It marks the redemption of Israel from slavery and the freedom that will lead to the Promised Land. Believers are instructed to eat with their sandals on, because God will and does call us to move at any time. Jesus was celebrating this meal of redemption and freedom when he offered the New Covenant.

2. The bread and wine that Jesus makes his body and blood for the disciples (and us) is already rich with Passover meaning. Passover bread was made hastily, without time to let the yeast rise. It was a symbol of the bread that God provided out of the ground, called manna. This bread kept the people physically alive. Yet Jesus takes this bread and provides not just physical but also spiritual healing. The blood of the of the Passover Lamb coincides with Jesus’ offering at Communion. The lamb’s blood marked the doorways of God’s people and saved them people the angel of death. In giving the cup of wine at the Passover, at his last meal, Jesus deepens and extends the meaning of the blood of salvation. It is no longer only about saving the people of Israel from Egypt’s oppression, but about saving all people from every type of oppression through his own blood shed on a cross at Calvary.



3. Through this New Covenant, we experience:

- **Transformation:** John Wesley called Communion a converting ordinance. We put down our burdens and God takes control and changes us, giving us new life.
- **Presence:** In the bread and cup of Communion, Jesus promises his own presence in a very real way. Jesus' presence in the gifts sustains us spiritually.
- **Forgiveness:** In Communion, Jesus calls us into confession of our sins and then gives us the gift of forgiveness through his body and blood and of table fellowship, restored relationship not only with him but with each other.
- **Eternal life:** When we celebrate Communion, we point back to the event in which we were given eternal life (Jesus' death and resurrection), we get a taste of eternal life in the present moment of our earthly lives, and we point ahead in anticipation of the heavenly banquet where we will celebrate with Jesus and all the saint in the life to come.

Celebration of Holy Communion: (see the *United Methodist Book of Worship*, pg. 64 "The Great Thanksgiving for Holy Thursday Evening" or use an alternative liturgy of your choice.

Offering Introduction: Jesus has given us the most precious gifts of his body and blood in the bread and cup of the new covenant. May our own covenant response be one of gratitude and giving what we have to extend his table in our world. You are invited to give as freely as you have received.

Offertory Prayer: God, with our gifts we thank you for the most amazing gifts you have given us and we thank you for including us in sharing your gifts with the people in our community. We ask that you help us to do so faithfully. In Jesus' holy name, amen.

Music Suggestions (Traditional):

UMH #618: Let us Break Bread Together /
MVPC #316: De Rodillas Partamos Hoy el Pan

Music Suggestions (Contemporary):

Thank You Jesus for the Blood – CCLI #7172456
Gracias Cristo por la Sangre, Trad by Rhode
Esther
([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcBOjRM
BHoc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcBOjRM BHoc))



Preaching Resources | Additional Components:

Prayer of Confession:

Holy One,

We cling to our perspectives, assumptions, and desires.

We cling to things of this world out of fear.

**Yet in the garden on that last night of your life,
we hear of you, wanting to cling,**

yet praying to let go.

May we learn from you.

May we let go like you.

May we trust in you.

Amen.