

The Lord's Crucifixion

a Holy Supper Compilation & Address for "Good Friday"
Mitchellville, MD, April 14th, 2017

Jesus said, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:23-24).

"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Myself" (John 12:31-32).

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

"Have you not read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'" (Mark 12:10-11).

(So) "Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'" (Matt. 16:24-26).

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18-19).

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send it to you" (John 16:7).

"Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:20-22).

"Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:32-33).

This is the evening we commemorate the Lord's crucifixion. In fact this last and most gruesome temptation of the Lord's life was finished by about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when He "breathed His last" (Luke 23:46), "bowed His head, and gave up His spirit" (John 19:30). And yet in giv-

ing up His spirit, like Abraham giving up his only son as a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22), He very quickly experienced the blessing and freedom of *new life* as a result of His victory in this temptation. The similarity is not just metaphorical: Abraham's temptation was to *withhold* his son from this cruel death and *not* cooperate with the Divine instruction. This was deeply symbolic of the Lord's own temptation *not to allow the crucifixion*, thus not to allow His own human will to be ruled by the Divine within Him. Note that He KNEW and UNDERSTOOD His Divine nature: by this time in His life He was almost fully glorified and He full appreciated the awesome significance of enduring this process. But He still had the familiar human experience of feeling *that life* as though it were separate from Him, perhaps even imposed upon Him, so that He had the natural human instinct to "push back" and try to continue in the world with His finite, natural perspective.

This is the temptation He finally overcame when He breathed His last, bowed His head, and gave up His spirit. It is also the *same temptation* we have to endure and overcome in *our* lives when we aspire to be His disciples. Only we don't have the Divine innately within us as the Lord did; our strength doesn't really come from within, it comes from the Lord as His love and wisdom flow into us – which is why we need to turn to Him in His Word for guidance, and *not* just "dig deep" inside *ourselves*.

Still, for the most part we know the truth and we know what we need to do; certainly the Gospels and the Heavenly Doctrines are perfectly clear about subordinating our natural and selfish loves to the heavenly loves of the Lord and the neighbor. Even the demons who possessed people in the Gospel stories knew the Lord and knew His power over them. But they still resented Him and wanted Him to leave them alone. In the same way what holds us back is that old familiar, proprietary feeling of wanting things our own way – despite knowing better.

The events and teachings about the Lord's death speak to us therefore on two levels – and not just with information. The Lord clearly is concerned to prepare and warn the disciples even as He strengthens Himself for this ordeal – not just for His own sake but for ours. For a little while things are going to be incredibly difficult but when it is over there will be great joy and comfort: "Most assuredly... unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies it produces much grain.... You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy."

This is our challenge, and this is why the Lord throughout His journey from the far north of Palestine all the way down into Jerusalem for this last week of His worldly life worked so hard to get the disciples ready. What He told them applies every bit to us, and sad to say, it is every bit as unbelievable to us as it was to the original 12. Can we let go and accept the Lord's direction? Can we lay down our lives as He did for others? Can we trust that this one grain of wheat – our grain; our brain; our sense of what we need and want – will if we sacrifice it for others actually multiply and produce "much grain" for eternal life? Everything the Lord predicted about His life and the lives of His disciples came true. Can we believe that it will come true for us?

"Let not your heart be troubled," He said: "you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

One of the most significant ways the Lord prepared the disciples for His death and resurrection was by commemorating the Passover with them. This, of course, was His "last supper" when He reclined (or sat down) with them, saying, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," and when

"He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'" (Luke 22:19-20).

The implications of this would not be realized until after the resurrection when the Lord again broke bread with two of His disciples at Emmaus and after all the conversation they'd had with Him on that day's journey from Jerusalem they finally realized who He was. Clearly, the act of breaking the bread, the sight, the smell, the feel and the taste of it combined with the things they had heard Him say on the way there all worked together to facilitate a new perception of the Lord in their lives. "And they said to one another, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'" (Luke 24:32).

But the fact is that without going through those motions, without reliving that experience with the bread they had NOT recognized Him.

What can this possibly mean for us? We have not received any natural bread or wine directly from the Lord's hands. And we are not seeing Him in His own Humanity, just as He appeared in His ministry on earth. – Or are we?

Consider this. If we approach the Word – especially the Gospels – with real confidence that what we are reading is true, and if we read with affection for the Lord, knowing that He is speaking to us from His wisdom and love, we may be able to see Him *just as clearly or even more clearly* than the original disciples did because we will not be put off by any aspect of His physical appearance, rather we will see what He really *means*, and what He is really all about. For just as "He expounded to *them* in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:26), so He has revealed to *us* the spiritual sense of the Word, including the Gospels and Revelation. In addition He has revealed the mysteries of heaven and hell, the nature of influx and the human mind, the doctrine of degrees, the science of correspondences, and much more, all of which allows us to see His Divine love and wisdom *in every aspect of our lives*.

Further, He has shown us what we sometimes call "the power of ultimates," that is, the power of literal and physical things to serve as containers, embodiments or expressions of spiritual realities, fixing and establishing these realities in our minds. Just as the literal sense of the Word is the basis, container and support for the spiritual sense (DSS 27 ff), so the things we say and do embody our affections and intentions, and when we say and do them as prescribed in the Word the correspondences inherent in them actually bring the Lord more fully into our conscious lives with greater holiness and strength than would ever be possible by reading or reflection alone.

Specifically, tonight, we have the opportunity to partake in a sacrament that the Lord Himself said we should do "in remembrance of Him." And this remembrance is not just because it is a re-enactment of something done in His physical presence, but because it involves things that in their physical form and function correspond exactly to His Divine Humanity.

The simple, unleavened bread corresponds to the pure, unmitigated, unadulterated, unselfish love He offers for the salvation of the whole human race – and each one of us in particular. The fermented wine corresponds to the refined, purified, glorified wisdom that He offers every one of us in the spiritual sense of His Word. And the physical consumption of these elements corresponds to the reception of these things in our hearts and minds to nourish and strengthen our faith. There is no other activity that can more powerfully open the doors of our minds to the practical presence of the risen Lord. So it is referred to in our doctrines as the gateway to heaven.

When Mary Magdalene and the other women first came to the tomb where the Lord had been buried the angels frankly asked them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee..." (Luke 24:5-6). In fact, they were not seeking the living because they thought He was dead! They still had to learn to see Him spiritually, to see the Infinite, Divine love and wisdom that had been expressed through a body that had now been glorified. The disciples would eventually do this, though not without a lot of hesitation, doubt and fear.

We may feel that same hesitation, doubt and fear in acknowledging the Lord's Divine Humanity, but we now have a singular advantage in that so much more has been revealed to us, so much more has been explained to us, that if we really apply ourselves to it we can both see and accept it all with joy if we are willing. When, therefore, we come to the holy supper let us do so in remembrance of His infinite love and His heavenly doctrine so that we can feel and appreciate His living presence with us no matter what we may have to suffer, no matter what in our natural, material perspective has to die.

Amen.

Lessons: Luke 22:47-54, 63-71
Luke 23:1-4, 6-16, 23-38 & 44-46

And at the dedication of the elements, Liturgy #707, 708 & 710
(including AC 4211, 4217 and AR 224:e)