



## **A Devotion for April 9, 2020 – Maundy Thursday**

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### **SCRIPTURE**

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 18:1-19:42

### **DEVOTION**

When I was six years old, I thought it so unfair that I couldn't participate in Communion. The practice at my father's church and all other Southern Baptist churches, was that only baptized believers could partake of Communion. I kept thinking, "...but I love Jesus. Isn't that enough?" One Saturday on my way home to Birmingham from Montgomery where my maternal grandparents lived, I distinctly remember standing in the back seat between my parents in the front seats. (You guessed it! No seatbelts!) I proclaimed my love for Jesus and they questioned me. I was resolute! I "walked the aisle" the next day at the evening service and told my dad, the pastor, that I loved Jesus and sought baptism. (Mother told me years later, that she thought I would forget about it.) The congregation came down to congratulate me, and I was baptized not long afterward -never with self-doubt. Many growth experiences made me question my decision at such a young age. My faith development carried me through these times as I realized we continue to grow throughout life in our understanding of God. I said and continue to say, "I love Jesus."

As children of an influential pastor of the second largest Baptist church in the state, my siblings and I "played" the Lord's Supper on some steps leading from upstairs into the kitchen. While our mother prepared Sunday lunch, we sat on the steps taking turns pretending to be the pastor, a deacon, or congregants. "This is my body, broken for you." (Serve the broken crackers.) "This Is my blood, shed for you." (Serve the grape juice.) We rotated the responsibilities, but my sisters and I got the most pleasure from the roles of pastor or deacon, because women weren't allowed to be either one in those days.

Biblical people read these instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, and in other passages. We continue to follow Jesus' example of the bread and the cup as the Lord's Supper, or the Last Supper, so that we remember Him. Do you think about your profession of faith? Your baptism? Your first Lord's Supper?

This passage has been taught many times in Sunday School. I was seeking a different way to teach my first grade class this scripture. I took them to the art gallery in the hallway behind the sanctuary. At that time, the famous painting of the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci, was displayed on the wall. We studied the replica. We counted the figures. One child said, "That is Jesus right there in the middle!" I asked them which one they thought was Judas, thinking this would be easy, as he held the money bag. They chose that figure, and I asked why they thought that was Judas. The unexpected response was, "Because he spilled his drink!" sure enough, Judas' drink was "tumped over." (That is first grade speech.) Think of their perspective. If you were six years old, and you were invited for supper with Jesus, what is the worst thing that could happen? You would spill your drink! Ah! Six year olds!

The scripture passage in John moves us to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus and some of the disciples went to pray. We should not be surprised that they went to a garden to commune with God. How many times have you felt you were on Holy ground in a garden? When the soldiers arrive, Jesus asks them who they seek.

"Jesus," they reply, and Jesus tells them, "I am he...I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you seek. Let these others [the disciples] go their way." Jesus seeks to "save" his followers, in more ways than one. Multiple times in this passage, Jesus takes upon himself the responsibility, the blame, the guilt, the shame and sets the rest of us free.

As a reading methods teacher, I have often taught young readers and their teachers, "sequence of events." Ashamed, I admit, I kept getting the next events confused. First Anaias, then Caiphas, then Pilate, multiple times. When our children would obsess over some insignificant teenager event, Phil would say, "It just doesn't matter." So, I will use his words to excuse my confusion. The important "take away" is that Jesus accepts all the derision in the disciples' place...in our place!

Of interesting note to me is Pilate's question, "What is truth?" How do you seek to know truth? Christians may seek to know truth in many ways. Some are:

- with thoughtful reading of scripture
- by communicating with others in the faith
- through prayer or meditation
- by examining life experiences
- with writing in journals or exploring dreams.

Did Pilate use any of these resources? He seemed frustrated that he couldn't KNOW, and dismisses Jesus.

The rest of the story is familiar. Jesus is crucified for ME and buried in a borrowed tomb. This is NOT the end of the story. In the darkest times of life, it is difficult to hold on to the light and joy that comes in the morning. Alleluia!

## **PRAYER**

Oh, God of all Creation,

Create in me a loving spirit and a heart that seeks to know your truth. As Christ gave His all, may I be loyal in understanding and displaying your love for me and others. Amen

Sources:

Bible KJV and NRSV

Soul Feast by Marjorie Thompson

The Broadman Bible Commentary Volume 9