



For the longest time, there was this little glass cup just above the desk in my bedroom. And for years, it seemed to only serve the purpose of collecting dust. It was the cup that held my little portion of wine for my first Communion: from back in our good 'ole Lutheran days when it was our esteemed wisdom to have young people wait until they went through the two or sometimes three-year stint of Confirmation before they could taste and see the goodness of the Lord, in a sense. We were convinced if they learned a bit more of our precious Martin Luther, including his cherished *Small Catechism*, along with memorizing Ten Commandments and the order of the books in the

Bible: that those middle schoolers might have a bit more understanding and appreciation of how this whole Communion thing comes about.

Well, let's just say I still don't have it figured out. And I'm not just talking about how loaves of bread somehow become the body of Christ or how of a few drops of wine become the blood of Christ. I don't need to know all the Divine inner-workings of that. But I still don't have the other part figured out: just exactly how can God welcome absolutely everyone to the table. I don't get how as much as the church over its treasured, but complicated, history; that we have tried to insist on all these rules and classes and worship attendance and many other fine-print details we may not say out loud, to ensure that the Lutheran prim and proper partake of the Lord's Supper celebration. I don't understand how God keeps on insisting on rising above our supposed human wisdom.

But I guess we don't have to look far tonight. Sometimes Maundy Thursday gets lost in the shuffle with our church calendar proceedings, including during this Holy Week, but I wonder if it is, in fact, one of the most important nights of the entire year. Because tonight is about God showing how the church should literally open all the doors and seats and access to the table. Tonight is about a story that doesn't make any sense whatsoever. Tonight is about the God in the flesh in Jesus Christ having the perfect opportunity to unleash all the holy standards upon the disciples, who were supposed to be living up to an expectation of following the Messiah in humility through acts of love and compassion and a basic trust in a paradise that God insisted on including all the world. Tonight is about the perfect chance for Jesus to let all the disciples know that they didn't quite make the cut to get to this table to celebrate the perfect love.

I still don't have it figured out: this story of Jesus' last mortal supper, and he wants to spend it with all of them. This story of betraying Judases and denying Peters and questioning Thomases and all the others with their fair share of struggles and wrestlings; and they all get a seat at the table celebrating a perfect love for all far-from-perfect them. It just might be one of the greatest stories in all of Scripture, and so, yes, tonight is one of the most important nights in all the church's ministry to the world.

And yes, tonight, is also about adding another spot to the table for Quinn and Adam and Arabella and Evan, not because over these last two Saturdays did they pass a test or somehow have this all figured out. Well, if they do, that's great for them and all, but tonight is more so about God's love for them, and God wanting to share that perfect love, no matter what imperfections may come in their life. Because, the truth is, tonight is not just about tonight for these four precious children of God. Tonight is about every Communion opportunity going

forward for them. Tonight is about ensuring that no matter the questions or struggles or wrestlings they have with God and what faith means to them or what Luther wrote half a millennia ago or how the Bible applies to an ever-changing culture that they are called to live in; that no matter what, they will always be welcomed back to this table.

Yes, tonight they get to taste and see the goodness of the Lord, but the truth is it has been within them from the very beginning. They didn't have to do a thing to earn it. They didn't have to take a class or pass a test to convince God they were worthy of a Messiah who was willing to face death head-on for them. Tonight serves as yet another reminder of that Gospel. They don't have to perfect love before God lets them into a sacred spot to receive the bread and wine. God already loves them far too much to not let them in, and that is the case for all of you. Tonight is about the holiest reminder, that no matter where your journey of faith takes you, there will always be a spot made just for you at this table, to taste the goodness that not even sin and death stands a chance against. So, for that grace set before Quinn, Adam, Arabella, Evan and all of us, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!