

Text: Hebrews 10:19-22. Maundy Thursday. **March 24, 2016.**

Grace and peace are yours through Jesus, who gives us his body and blood. Amen.

How do you feel when you take the Lord's Supper? Maybe there's a lot of emotions. I feel happy. I'm getting Jesus' body and blood. This is so cool! I feel really close to God. I mean, after all, this is as close to God as I'm ever going to get on this earth. Is that always how you feel? Many times people come here looking serious, heads down, almost sad, maybe a little unworthy, I'm not good enough for this. Maybe a little guilty. I don't deserve this, not after what I've done. What about feeling confident, coming here with your head held high? Jesus did this for me! Jesus loves me! Jesus gave his real body and true blood for me! What about assured? I am forgiven! I have no doubts! What about clean? I am washed of all my sins by the most powerful detergent of all, the blood of Jesus, that cleanses us from all sins! Yeah, there can be a lot of emotions that go along with the Lord's Supper. The first one that strikes us is confident. Be confident. Be confident to take the Lord's Supper. Yes, there's instruction first and yes, there's a public profession of unity of faith, but tonight let's focus on confidence. Be confident to take the Lord's Supper.

Brothers and sisters, we have confidence to enter the most Holy Place. Confidence is boldness, openness to say all things. That includes our sin. We don't have to try to hide our sin from God. He knows all our sins. When we come for the Lord's Supper, we come openly admitting our sin. And we come with confidence that all our sins are forgiven. We come with confidence into this most holy place, right up close to God's altar, right here to this most holy place.

Now, when the Hebrews heard this phrase, "confidence to enter the most holy place," they must have thought the writer had lost his mind. You did not enter the Most Holy Place. You did not even think about entering the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was the innermost room of the Old Testament Temple. Only one person, the high priest, would enter the Most Holy Place. He only entered once a year. And he only entered after a number of sacrifices for his own sins, rituals to make him clean and after this Most Holy Place was filled with smoke. I doubt that even the high priest, on that one day a year, entered with confidence. He probably entered with fear. Did I do the right sacrifices? Did I carry out the right rituals? I mean, it's been a year since I did this. Better not forget anything.

Why did God require this? God wanted to show the separation between sin and holiness. Sin separates us from a holy God. Our sin leaves us outside of God's most holy presence and his most holy place. And the blood of those animal sacrifices, the smoke of those rituals could not really take away sin. But the blood of Jesus can! The blood of Jesus did take away sin! The blood of Jesus removed the separation and gives us confidence to enter the most holy place. The blood of Jesus will soon be right in your mouths for many of you and right in your veins and right in your heart. You are pure and holy. You have confidence to enter this most holy place.

Jesus opened a new and living way into this most holy place. That new and living way is his body! See the connection with the Lord's Supper? Jesus' body, given in the Lord's Supper is the

new and living way, the only way. Jesus' blood, poured out for you and placed on your soul is the way to enter the most holy place with confidence. Jesus' body, Jesus' blood, this is the new and living way. The word, "new," has a cool picture behind it. The word literally means, "freshly slain." Think how perfectly that fits Jesus! Just a few years before this book of Hebrews was written, Jesus was slain for all sins, once and for all. But this sacrifice of Jesus is still fresh, still new. Jesus' sacrifice never goes away. The sacrifice never gets old. It's always fresh, always new. And think of what that means for the Lord's Supper. Now we are not literally sacrificing Jesus again and again every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper. He was sacrificed once and for all on the cross. But, the once and for all sacrifice he made is freshly applied to you each time you receive his blood that gives you confidence to enter the most holy place, each time you take his body that is the new and living way into God's presence. That thoughtless shrug when your spouse came home that left her thinking, "Why bother coming home? No one cares." Forgiven! Fresh forgiveness here at the Lord's Supper. That loveless gossip you couldn't help but spread? The freshly slain blood of Jesus covers that sin. You are forgiven. His body and blood are fresh forgiveness for every fresh wound of sin, fresh forgiveness for yesterday's sins, today's sins, tomorrow's sins.

There is no more separation between you and God because of sin. Come here with confidence! Be confident that Jesus' body opened a new and living way, through the curtain. Sorry, just have to give you a little background of this Old Testament picture. The curtain was a full hand thick. It ran from floor to ceiling, separating the Most Holy Place from the rest of the world. That curtain was the one and only way into the most holy place. And when Jesus gave his body on the cross, that hand-thick curtain was torn in two, from ceiling to floor, ceiling to floor, showing that God himself reached down from heaven and tore that curtain in two. There is no more separation from God because of sin. There is confidence to enter the most holy place. There is now a new and living way to God, Jesus! His body is the one and only way to God. His body is opened for us, given to us, placed on our hands and in our mouths, in the Lord's Supper. That's cool. That's confidence.

We have a great high priest, one who didn't sacrifice bulls and goats, but one who sacrificed himself once and for all. We have confidence to draw near to God. And to keep on drawing near to God. And to keep on coming to God with confidence. The way is opened: Jesus' body, the way is fresh: Jesus' blood, the way and the truth and the life is begging us to draw near to him. But who can draw near? How can we draw near? Look at the four things that are mentioned in verse 22. A sincere heart, full assurance of faith, sprinkled hearts, bodies washed. Before we look at these each individually, let's make a comment about all of them. All of these things, a sincere heart, full assurance of faith, sprinkled hearts, bodies washed, these are all things God has to give to us and work in us. We can't make ourselves have a sincere heart. That's a gift from God. We can't just rattle us up some full assurance. That's God's working. God sprinkles our hearts. God washes our bodies and souls. Please don't think that these things, or coming to the Lord's Supper with confidence is something I just have to make myself have and if I just have enough will power, then I've got the right stuff God requires. This is what God gives.

A sincere heart. This is a heart that is real, genuine. No faking or counterfeit here. Let's draw near to God with this kind of heart, not just going through the motions. This isn't the child's apology, "My daddy says I'm supposed to say I'm sorry, so I'm saying it. I'm sorry." This is the real deal. A sincere heart. Full assurance of faith. This is a wealth of assurance, complete confidence, most certain confidence. Notice how the idea of confidence and assurance are repeated here. And notice what gives assurance: faith. Faith in Jesus gives assurance. Trust in my works will never lead to assurance. Imagine standing before God and saying, "God, look at all my good works. I've certainly been good enough for you to love me." Do you really want to do that, especially when you remember that God's standard is perfection? But we don't have to come to God with the unassurance of works. We have the full assurance, the complete confidence of faith, trusting that Jesus has already done it!

So we keep on knocking on heaven's door and keep on crawling into our heavenly Father's lap with a sincere heart, full assurance, hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience. Sprinkling was a common ritual in the Old Testament. People would be sprinkled with blood or ashes to signify being cleansed from sin. But this sprinkling of the heart is more than a ritual. This is the real thing. This is more than the blood of animals. This is the blood of Jesus. This is more than an outward sprinkling to signify the removal of sin, this is the inward sprinkling that actually does remove sin, not just on the outside, but all the way down to the inside, to the guilty conscience itself. Oooo, that guilty conscience. That guy is the worst, isn't he? He remembers everything. That one-night stand 20 years ago. I know it's forgiven, but I can't forget. That divorce. I know it wasn't my fault. I know it's forgiven, but... That guilty conscience. Stands sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. Our status is not sin. Our status is saved. Our condition is not condemnation. Our condition is confidence. Confidence my sins are forgiven, confidence Jesus paid for the guilt along with the sin, confidence to beat down the devil with the cross of Christ. Confidence that is sprinkled on your heart with bread and wine. Confidence that Jesus' body and blood reach down and cleanse a guilty conscience.

Confidence that we are washed with pure water. I know it's Maundy Thursday and so we have been focusing on the Lord's Supper. But here we get to see the blessing of baptism as well. God washed you! God cleansed you! Baptism is not some outward, ritual washing to clean the body. Baptism is an inward, spiritual washing that cleans the soul. Baptism gives me a confident status. I am God's child! I am forgiven! I don't walk into God's house guilty. I walk in forgiven! I don't come to the Lord's Supper condemned. I come to the Lord's Supper, clean and confident. Amen.