

# Maundy Thursday 2018 Against Blind Optimism

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There is great depth in the theology of the church, many doctrines of the faith and mysteries that are beyond our comprehensions. Controversies over such matters have ignited debate from the very beginning. Families have been broken, churches have split and reformations have changed the course of history. There are many schools of thought permeating society today that take advantage of the current confusion in our theological imbalance. Is the Gospel so difficult to understand or is man's arrogance and drive for supremacy a cloud that would block out the Son?

We are here today in the throws of Holy Week, it is Maundy Thursday, a day which much of the modern church lets slide by without recognition. It's not a happy day after all. Our focus is set on God, about to be beaten in the flesh of His Incarnation that by His death we may be saved...saved from our transgressions...saved from our sins. Many Christians would rather celebrate Christmas and Easter and forget the truth of why God would have to become flesh and suffer the way of the Cross. The Incarnation of God into our midst and His Resurrected body to the right hand of God are, after all, the most positive and optimistic aspects of the Christian faith. Some would like us to forget the darker side of our sinful natures and pretend our relationship with Jesus Christ is a life lived with butterflies and rainbows. The truth is...we chose sin and it took the unfathomable love of God Almighty to pay the price and overcome our debt. Christ would have to become one of us in order to suffer and die for us.

Fr. Chris and myself are not afraid to preach the Gospel truth, for that is what God has called us to do. But there are deceivers out there that only want to gain popularity by skipping the tough stuff and only venture out on clear days where hard truths can be overlooked. Today we will come to the Table in fellowship with each other. We will partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ as His presence permeates the elements of bread and wine strengthening us as one body in Christ. We do this after

acknowledging and confessing our sins and thereby receiving the absolution for our sins. Why do we do this? Because it is only in complete submission to God Almighty that we can come to the Table worthily...not that we aren't still sinners, but that we can enter the heavenly arena as forgiven sinners, and share at the Table with the saints that have gone before us.

So, I will get to my point...There is a grand deception on the world scene today that is in direct contrast to our Lenten journeys and our Holy Week focus. The deception comes out of what could easily be called blind optimism. I am talking about the heretical view that God cannot see our sins because the blood of Christ has covered them, and so we need not concern ourselves with repentance. Isn't just like the modern church to take away the foundation because they no longer like the way the historical building looks. Modernity is regulating itself to the individual and dissembling the traditional church right before our eyes. In an attempt to avert themselves from shame, many Christians are justifying sinful lives and churches are following suit. It is the same concept that says you can cut down on crime simply by making some criminal activities legal. If we make God blind...then we must be okay to do what we want. The omniscience of the Almighty is denied and man is allowed to act as he chooses in front of the closed eyes of God. The modern day theologies of smiling preachers and their prosperity gospels are steps down the wrong path. Joel Osteen will not even speak of sin and Rick Warren tells his followers to "relax, God does not see you sins." Maybe their bibles are thinner than mine...maybe their scriptures have been condensed to just the important stuff. I prefer the unabridged version where truth can be found in my frailty and God's strength.

So what's the answer to our modern day dilemma? Listen to St. Paul in his second letter to Timothy and tell me if they don't hit home in today's world; *"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the*

*work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry”* (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

So, what can we do as traditional Christians who want to maintain our moral backbones while maintaining the integrity of God’s Word in a world that now sees us as the enemy? I don’t have all the answers, but I do know where to start. Trusting in our scriptures that God is the same yesterday, today and forever, we are to Submit to God Almighty, admit that we are a sinners, repent of those sins and accept the grace and mercy of His forgiveness. (So simple even a caveman can do it). We don’t live in a positive world, nor do we live in a negative world, but we do live in a hopeful world were we know that something beautiful lies beyond the sufferings of this world.

And so we come together on this night of watchfulness, this night of consolation as we remain steadfast in our faith and prayerfully sit with our Lord as He prepares to take our sins, our burdens and our heartaches to the Cross. But before we enter the Garden we must partake of the sacrament. On this night Jesus established a perpetual meal that would become the source of life for all mankind that we could die to sin and live again in him, so that in His New Covenant we could enter into a special intimacy with him, and through him...with the Father.

The hope presented in this sacrament is tied to all that will follow him this night of His betrayal. He will begin to shed his blood by the force of his prayers in Gethsemane. He will offer himself willingly with the words, *“not my will, but thine be done”* and He will be obedient unto death.

The words that we will say together tonight are so powerful that most modern churches either remove them or water them down. But we will remain steadfast in our prayers and pray; *“Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his Body, and our souls washed through his most precious Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.”* (1928 Book of Common Prayer; pg. 82).

When you come to the altar rail this night remember it was not the betrayal of Judas that put Jesus on the Cross, but it was our very choice to live sinful lives that hung our Lord on the tree. So tonight and forevermore stand not before a blind God but kneel before your Father in Heaven who sees the secrets of your heart.