

Maundy Thursday – Epistle

FAMILY STYLE

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Maundy Thursday

Analysis by Marcus Felde

23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

DIAGNOSIS: Coming Together for the Worse

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – Food Fight

Our pericope follows a passage that begins “Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse” (11:17). What does he mean, “come together for the worse”? He means that the occasion for unity becomes a scene of disunity. Like a windshield crazing, dividing lines are spreading through the communion. To fight thus over a meal which is meant to be communal is a travesty. (Can’t you just hear them? “Mea cuppa!” “No! Mea cuppa!”)

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – Waiting Like

Pigs

Heedless communicants, obedient only to appetites, go ahead with their own suppers without noticing that others have nothing to eat. They do not see (“discern,” v. 29) the unity of the body of Christ, which is to be made visible in the communion. The sacrament short-circuits, because of the lack of faith in Christ. This precious bread and cup are cast before swine.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – Choking

The meal cannot then serve its purpose, which is to give life. “Therefore ... some have died” (v. 30). Not that the meal becomes poisonous. Rather, I surmise, because its life-giving medicine becomes unavailable to us, who are already terminal ill with cancer of the ego, we’re toast.

PROGNOSIS: Coming Together for the Better

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – Heimlich Maneuver

Lord Jesus, ostensibly broken, has become, in a secret (heimlich) way, a gathering place. His death meets the faithful in the meal: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” The salvific sacrament is a meal shared, in common remembrance of one Lord. The coming together of flour particles in the manufacture of bread and of individual little grapes in the making of wine should be remembered, to understand the sacrament. Being joined to Christ’s death, we are united with his resurrection as well, and with one another. One lump. No choke.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Advanced Solution) – Waiters

“What I received, I handed on to you.” Not only tradition, but also bread and cup are received from the Lord when we receive them “in remembrance of me.” This happens by faith in Christ, referred to as “discerning” the body (v. 29) or “remembering” Christ (v. 24 and v. 25), or (implied in v. 20) “really” eating the Lord’s supper. Who are we really waiting for, when we are

patient over the meal? The maitre d', our lord. The one who put the Maundy in this Thursday by mandating that we "love one another."

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Family Style*

Taken in this spirit, the Lord's supper is verily the Lord's. When we eat and drink it, we "get together for the better" and not for the worse. The "new covenant" (from the Latin for "coming together") has us convening at a round table where everybody sits next to Jesus. Everybody sits next to everybody else, too. And the more we get together ... the merrier we'll be!