

Chapel Sermon – March 11, 2015 Lutheran Theological Seminary, Tshwane, SA

Text: Luke 22:24-30 – “And an argument also happened among them –the issue of who of them seems to be greatest. But he said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those exercising authority over them are called benefactors. You are not thus. But let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who reclines [at table] or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines? But I am in the midst of you as the one who serves. You are the ones who have remained with me in my trials. And I appoint for you just as my Father appointed to me a kingdom, in order that you may eat at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

The prophet asked of the Lord: “Why is your apparel red, and Your garments like his who treads in the winepress?” (Is 63:2 NKJV).

And the evangelist provided the answer from the Lord: “But let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.” St. Luke shows to you how THE GREATEST SERVES THE YOUNGER, how your Lord, his garment dripping with blood, served you in his Passion.

You are the younger. That means that you are temporal. Because of your sin, you are deserving of divine punishment. Because you are deserving of divine punishment, you are terminal. And because you are terminal, you hunger and thirst for your last supper. In relation to the Ancient of Days, you are younger and without merit; in relation to the eternal, you are temporal and, thus, terminal.

Jesus is the greatest. He is eternal and governs all of creation, and yet he serves the younger ones who are seated at his table. There he dons the garment of a servant. This garment is discolored and befouled and stained. The appearance of the garment reveals the nature of his service for you; it shows the extent of his toil on your behalf.

Though Jesus is the greatest, he suffered greatly. He was betrayed by Judas and denied by Peter. At the Mount of Olives the disciples could not stay awake to pray with their Lord, and a multitude sent by the chief priests arrested him as though he were a criminal. He was mocked by Herod and condemned by Pilate. The Jewish leaders accused him of blasphemy and the people rejected him in favor of a murderer. Jesus was hung on a cross at Calvary to die. Jesus suffered greatly these pains and maltreatments that you deserve because you are sinners. Because you are sinners you have angered God. And because you have angered God, you deserve his divine ire and mocking and punishment for your evil thoughts, and blasphemous words and hurtful deeds. Jesus, though, has suffered on your behalf: the greatest serves the younger.

Though Jesus is the greatest, he associated with criminals and the condemned. He was imprisoned like Barabbas, and insurrectionist and murdered. He was crucified with two men deserving of death. Jesus associated with criminals and the condemned so that you can be counted among the righteous. Your actions are criminal. You are no better than Barabbas: you profess to love your neighbor, but hate your enemy; you claim to be patriotic, but you ignore the government laws that aren't to your liking. And you argue among yourselves as to who is better than the other. And so you belong to those condemned to die. Jesus, though, switched places with you. The righteous one became a criminal and was condemned so that you criminals would be declared righteous. The greatest serves the younger. Though Jesus is the greatest, he prepared and serves to you the Last Supper. He is the greatest. This means that he ought to sit at the Table and be served. Likewise, you are the younger, and as such, you ought to serve. This, though, will not work, because you have nothing to prepare and nothing to give. And so, the greatest takes the position of the younger. Jesus serves rather than sits at his Table. He announces to you the entrée: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.....This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

In the Last Supper, Jesus gives you the fruit of his suffering and criminal associations: his body and blood, torn and shed upon the cross. Jesus suffers and dies so that you have the food and drink of eternal life. The greatest serves the younger in the Last Supper. In his Passion, Jesus served you. And if you wish to understand his service, then do not look at the beautiful robe supplied by Herod. Herod erroneously thought that Jesus was the younger, by dressing him up, he jokingly made him the greatest. Instead, if you wish to understand Jesus' service, then look at the garment of his Passion. It is discolored with dirt and befouled from sweat, and stained with his own blood. It is discolored with suffering and befouled from his criminal associations and stained with the drink of the Last Supper. The garment of Jesus' Passion reveals to you that the greatest serves the younger. Jesus, the greatest acts as the younger, so that you, the younger, might be the greater. His garment, dripping with blood, is glorious, and it is your glory. Amen.