

An heirloom is something which is passed down from generation to generation. Such an heirloom is precious to the who receive it, not always because it is worth a lot of money, but because of the sentimental value that is attached to it. As one generation gets older, it begins to pass along such heirlooms, along with an explanation of where it came from and why it is considered so precious. The hope is that the new generation will prize that heirloom just as much as the generation before. On the night on which Jesus was betrayed, He also passed something along for each succeeding generation, but it was not an heirloom. It was the Lord's Supper. He instituted this sacrament to be passed down from generation to generation as something very precious. He did this because He is gracious and compassionate, desiring us to be absolutely sure that our sins have been covered when He gave His body and blood into death for us. Throughout the Bible, this love which the Lord has for us shines through. This evening we are basing our devotion on the words of a Psalm. This Psalm does not speak of the Lord's Supper directly, but it does stress that **THE LORD IS GRACIOUS AND COMPASSIONATE**. As we take a closer look at this Psalm, we shall see first of all that His deeds are glorious and majestic. Then we shall see that He remembers His covenant forever.

As we study the Bible, we become keenly aware of the Lord's love and compassion. It becomes evident to us in many different ways. The Psalmist states it this way: **"Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them."** (2) Each time that we use the Apostles' Creed, we are reminded of the many great works which the Lord has done, and continues to do for us. We state that we believe in the Father Who created us. As we look at our world and the bodies which He has given to us, we can see how He has lavished His love and compassion upon us in giving us body and soul, our senses and reasoning abilities. And then, after creating us, He also supplies all of our daily needs, frequently in abundance over what we can use for each day. We trust in His constant care, even as we are seeking His protection from the coronavirus.

The Son is our Redeemer, and His work of laying down His life for the sins of the world is truly glorious and majestic. Again the Psalmist writes: **"He provided redemption for his people."** (9) Because the Lord is gracious and compassionate, He could not stand by doing nothing while all mankind was lost in sin, doomed to eternity in hell. This why Jesus came into this world. He fulfilled all of the demands of the law, and then allowed His holy, precious blood to be shed through His innocent suffering and death on the cross. It was on the that first Maundy Thursday evening that the events were set into motion which ended with His crucifixion and death. Jesus showed the Lord's tremendous love and compassion on us fallen sinners by allowing all of this to happen so that He could provide forgiveness for the sins of the world.

Then the work of the Holy Spirit is to bring each one of us to faith, that is, to put our trust in this Jesus, Who laid down His life for our sins. Through the means of grace, which are the gospel as found in the Word and Sacraments, He turns our stubborn hearts to ones which beat with love for what our Savior has accomplished for us. Without the work of the Spirit, none of us would be praising Him for His love and compassion.

Glorious and majestic are the deeds which each person of the Triune God has accomplished for us. Everything which He does, He does out of His never ending love and compassion for us. Therefore the Psalmist writes: **"He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and compassionate."** (4) Our Lord wants us to remember all that He has done for us. And that is one of the reasons Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night He was betrayed. We hear Him say to us: *"Do this, in remembrance of me."* As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are to be reminded of the glorious and majestic thing which He did for us. As we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are also receiving the body and blood which He shed for us when He died on the cross. As we receive this sacrament, we are proclaiming that Jesus died on the cross to take away my sins, and at the same time, we receive the assurance from Jesus Himself that our sins are washed away in His blood.

The Lord is gracious and compassionate to us in all of the deeds which He has done and which He continues to do for us. In addition to that, as the Psalmist says, **“He remembers His covenant forever.”** (5) What that means is that what the Lord says with His Word, He puts into action. He will not forget any of His promises which He has made to us. **“He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever — holy and awesome is his name.”** (9)

On this Maundy Thursday evening, we remember a covenant which He made with us as He celebrated His last Passover supper with the disciples. We call this covenant the Lord’s Supper, Holy Communion, or even the Sacrament of the Altar. The covenant is really a promise of what Jesus says He will do for us. He gave His body and blood for us when He was crucified, and that paid for all of our sins. When we confessed our sins earlier in the service, and then heard the words of absolution, that was totally effective. All of your sins were forgiven. So why did Jesus also give us the Lord’s Supper? It is because He is gracious and compassionate. He wants us to have every assurance that our sins have been washed clean in His blood. In this sacrament, as we receive the bread and wine in a natural manner, He also gives us His very body and blood. By doing this, He makes it something which is very personal for each recipient, for Jesus is speaking to each person individually that He gave His body and blood for them, and so has washed away all of their sins. In His love and compassion, Jesus wants us to be absolutely certain that all of our sins have been washed away in His blood. That is the purpose of this sacrament — to assure us again, in a very personal way, of His love and forgiveness that took away all of our sins.

This sacrament benefits all who receive in faith what it offers. The Psalmist continues: **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”** (10) To fear the Lord is to have awe and respect for all that He has done for us. And then coupled with that is a trust in His promises. As we approach the Lord’s table, we know that His promises are true, because everything which He says in His Word He puts into action. We trust that He is giving us everything which He says — not just the elements of bread and wine, but also, in a spiritual way, His very body and blood, and with that comes the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation which He won for us through His suffering and death on the cross.

In His love and compassion, the Lord desires to give us every assurance of our forgiveness and salvation. It was for that reason that He gave us this sacrament, and asked to us continue to do it, and do it often, in remembrance of Him. An heirloom has great sentimental value for the one who receives it. This sacrament is even more precious to us because it is more than sentimental in value, it actually brings us the blessings which our gracious and compassionate Lord desires to give us. So may we hold it as a precious gift from Him, and make use of it often to strengthen our faith.