

Sin is Real, and So is the Solution
First Sunday of Lent
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West Valley Church

Theme: We all default to our training in times of crisis. The Lord's Supper trains us to turn to Christ and not rely on our own strength when crisis comes.

Matthew 26:20-30

20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21 And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."

22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"

23 Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."* *or "Your yourself have said it."

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Do you remember the name Sully Sullenberger?

On a cold January day in 2009, Capt Sullenberger became an international hero by successfully landing his Airbus A320 on the Hudson River in New York City. All 155 people on board survived and were rescued by nearby boats.

The crisis happened when the plane struck a flock of Canadian geese and lost power to both engines. Instead of panicking, Sullenberger and his copilot drew upon the thousands of hours of training, flight simulations, and flight time to make one good decision after another.

Under stress, we always default to our training.

What is your default training? We think we know. We'd like to believe we would do the right things. But the crisis moment reveals the truth.

Who trained you? Often we unconsciously follow the model given to us by our families. How did your mother respond to difficult situations? How did your father do it? Did they teach you a positive example, or did you learn what not to do?

What if we thought of the Last Supper as part of Jesus training course – a last, crucial lesson to prepare them for the crisis he knew was about to come?

When Jesus and his disciples gather, I imagine things were pretty tense. Jesus has already told them that at the coming Passover, he would be delivered up to be crucified. He then injects even more anxious energy into the gathering by announcing, “One of you will betray me.”

Why does he do this? Perhaps it was to prepare them for what was coming next. To make it clear that the hard things that are coming are still held within God's sovereign power and purpose.

Or perhaps he wanted to test them. The question reveals what their default training truly is. Under stress, the Twelve were “very sad and began to say to him one after the other, ‘Surely not I, Lord?’” Each wants to prove his own loyalty. It's every man for himself. If this were a test, no one passed.

But perhaps Jesus wants to provide an opportunity for truth-telling, for confession. Judas makes one, of a sort. Verse 25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “Yes, it is you.”* *or “Your yourself have said it.”

Whether it was for preparation, or testing, or truth-revealing, or all-of-the-above, the question brings urgency and focus to what happens next.

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.

28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

To address our unpreparedness, failure, and betrayal, Jesus provides himself.

To hold us in loving relationship with God and one another Jesus provides his Body.

To provide complete and permanent forgiveness, Jesus provides his Blood.

To overcome our insufficiency, Jesus is sufficient. To our weakness, Jesus is our strength.

In other words, Jesus teaches us the most important lesson for living: In case of emergency, turn to Jesus. That is to be our default training.

Sullenberger would later look back on that Hudson River landing and say, “One way of looking at this might be that for 42 years, I’ve been making small, regular deposits in this bank of experience, education, and training. And on January 15, the balance was sufficient so that I could make a very large withdrawal.”

What if every time you gathered with the people of God and celebrated the Lord’s Supper, Jesus was making a grace deposit into your life? What if today is a day – a difficult but important day – when Jesus is enabling you to make a withdrawal sufficient to the work of repentance, confession, and forgiveness you now need to do?

My prayer for each of us today is that we will be able to default to our training as Christ's disciples. My prayer is that we will trust Jesus, rely on his grace, and together safely land this plane.

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