

1 March 2023
Lent 1 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“What Will You Give Me?”

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

What will you give me?

That just might be the question of our age. What’s in it for me? What will I get out of this? What we do not have we want, and when we have we want more. This question cares not about the giver, only what is given. To me. For me. This is a question born of selfishness, of self-centeredness. This is what sin has done to us. Curved us in on ourselves.

This is a question that never would have been asked in Eden. Not only because God had given them everything, but because as children of God, they knew there was someone giving to them and taking care of them. They didn’t have to worry about themselves - someone else was doing that. So they were free to worry about others, and care for them, and give to them. The focus was on the who, not the what. On God, on others. That’s what mattered.

Until satan put the focus on the *what*, and everything changed. Now the *who* was me. Giving to others became giving to me. ***What will you give me?***

This is, of course, the question Judas asked. ***What will you give me to betray him to you?*** The *who* didn’t matter to Judas; the *what* did. The Jewish leaders and Judas agreed on the price for Jesus: thirty pieces of silver. I wonder how long the negotiation went on, if Judas wanted more, if they wanted to pay less. That’s how those things usually go. But that thirty was the price is no surprise - the prophet Zechariah (chapter 11) had written that some 550 years earlier.

So Judas got what he wanted. And while he fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah, he also fulfilled the words of Jesus, who said: *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul* (Matthew 16:26)? For when the focus becomes the *what* and not the *who*, no longer do others not matter, **neither do you**. For later, when Judas later regretted what he had done and tried to give the money back, the priests didn’t care a whit about him - their *what* was their power and position, and *who* Judas was, or what he needed, was of little importance to them. They got what they wanted.

How different Jesus. For Jesus’ reality is not the sinful reality we inhabit, but of Eden.

And if ***What will you give me?*** would never have been asked in Eden, never would it be asked by Jesus. He doesn't want *from* you, He wants you. He doesn't want *from* you, He wants only to *give* to you.

And so, ironically, the same night that Judas would betray - or hand over - Jesus' Body and Blood to the Jewish leaders, Jesus would also hand over His Body and Blood - *to His disciples*. His Body given *for* them on the cross is first given to them in the Supper. His Blood shed *for* them is first given to them. Jesus gives Himself to them. It is *who* to *who*, as the focus should be. And with that, receiving Jesus, they receive everything with Him - His forgiveness, His life, and His kingdom.

With Judas, ***What will you give me?*** resulted in him losing everything.
With Jesus, *What does He give me?* results in me gaining everything.

The disciples don't get that, of course. Not yet anyway. Their thinking is like our thinking, is post-Eden thinking, and so talk of a kingdom launches them into an argument about which of them is the greatest. What they will *get*. So in response to this, *what they get* is Jesus on His hands and knees, serving them, washing their feet. That is Eden thinking, Eden living. *Who*, not *what*. *Who*, even if that meant doing this lowliest of low tasks.

And then Jesus tells them this is what they will be doing, too. They will ***love one another as He has loved them***. They will focus on the *who*, not the *what*. And how they will love is by doing the new commandment He gives them. A new commandment, not the old ones. The Gospel commandment He gave them to teach, to preach, to baptize, to absolve, to feed. And, He says, ***by this all men will know that you are my disciples***, because they will be doing as He does, thinking as He does, and loving as He does. They, and the Church, will be all about the *who*, not the *what*. Which is putting things back to the way things were; back to the way things should be.

Our challenge this Lenten season is to think this way. This way of thinking so different from how our world thinks, from how we've been trained to think. But while challenging, not impossible. For nothing is impossible with God and His Spirit. And we see this with the disciples. There is a great change in them after they receive the Spirit, as they go out and do what Jesus commanded them, as they go out and give Jesus. Not perfectly, of course. But as Jesus and His Spirit live in them and work in them.

And in you. For while you were not there that night, Jesus has washed you in the waters of baptism and in the cleansing of absolution. Jesus has fed you with His Body and Blood. Jesus has served you and taught you and given you Himself and His kingdom. We need not ask Him ***What will you give me?*** for He has given us everything - not the everything of this world - that's post-Eden thinking! - but the everything of the world to come. The everything of Eden. The everything for life everlasting.

Which is what you want, really. For Jesus *could* give you the everything of this world, and with Judas you could lose everything. Or Jesus could give you the everything of the world to come, and with Him you gain everything. That's what Jesus has done, and He bids us think that way. A new way.

So tonight we heard of the way of man and the ways of God. We heard of the giving of betrayal and the giving of the Supper. We heard of the desire for greatness and the serving of footwashing. We heard of selfishness and self-giving. We heard the way things were, the way things are, and the way things are again in Jesus. And in Lent, repenting of who we are and do, and receiving who Jesus is and has, we are restored, forgiven, and changed.

So while in His Passion, Jesus told His disciples, ***Where I am going you cannot come***, for He had to go to the cross alone. But when He comes again in glory, then will come true what He then said: ***Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but afterwards you will follow me***. We will follow Him through death and the grave to life everlasting.

So ***What will you give me?***

That is what He has come to give you.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.