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First Christian Church
Colorado Springs, Colorado
April 5, 2012 Maundy Thursday

Communion Meditation: Tangled

At tomorrow's Good Friday service, I begin my sermon with a story from a friend about one of life's mysteries: about how he will often put each of his separate computer cords neatly separated in his laptop bag when he travels and yet finds them, when he arrives at his destination, all unaccountably tangled together. Such "tangledness" is indeed an apt simile for life sometimes and it is an apt way into thinking about both Good Friday and what we do this time.

For, indeed, such "tangledness" does come together around the Table which we are remembering and re-enacting this night. For we remember how the disciples gathered with Jesus to celebrate the Passover, how they were enjoying their time with one another and Jesus, how they were gratified to be able to celebrate as did their forefathers and -mothers did for generations the Passover celebration of God's faithfulness in rescuing from the horrors of slavery in Egypt so many years ago. But – like that phone call in the middle of the night that unleashes worry and fear, like that sudden revelation from a friend or spouse or child that hurts your heart – Jesus says that one of them will betray him. The confusion, the fear, the anxiety, the upset – the tangledness, all of a sudden, of life – is just palpable. And we too, in our small way, in our remembrance tonight sit at that Table horrified amidst that news, tangled up ourselves. For we know the story of the next two days, the story of Jesus becoming entangled Himself, fatally entangled, in the machinations of mean-spirited men and in the grip of the Roman imperial court where justice gives way to expediency.

But, my friends, even amidst the horror and the entangling of all of these events,

all of these feelings, all of these fears, that is not the only Word we hear this night, and not the only Word we take with us. For we are reminded of the very last thing that Jesus did at that Passover supper so long ago by which he transformed it into the Lord's Supper for us. We sometimes miss this point because we celebrate communion by receiving bread and cup at the same time. But bread and cup were separate moments in that long-ago meal, the bread coming early in the meal. But the cup, the last thing that Jesus does, the cup comes at the *end* of the meal: As Luke wrote it, "And [Jesus] did the same with the cup **after supper**, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

And what is that new covenant? It is the Word that we will depart with this night even amidst the tangledness of life, even amidst the tangledness of the story of this night. For the new covenant in Jesus Christ is the covenant of God's eternal, undying, everlasting, undefeatable love that was to the Hebrew people and now, through Jesus, is to us as well. The covenant that Jesus proclaims is one that sets us free: no matter how tangled up our lives, Christ is there – undefeated – seeking to help us undo our tangles, undo the tangles that too much of the world has gotten itself into. The tangles are real, the betrayal on Thursday and the death on Friday are real, and we cannot rush through them. But we can and do move through them aware of, believing in, and being freed by that final action of Jesus' around the Table: For indeed this new covenant is one that will defeat death. That is the hope we will take with us this night, the hope we anticipate in its full form come Easter morning. For that new covenant, for that abiding hope, for the way God through Christ works within the messy tangles of our lives, thanks be to God. Let us pray: