

## 40 Days of Prayer, The Last Supper, Mark 14:12-25, 3/5/23

Today, we are going to talk about one of my favorite things in all the world, dinner with friends. Of course, this isn't just any dinner with friends, this is a dinner that changed the world forever. Now I don't know about you, but I've never had a dinner that changed the world. I've had dinners that changed my waistline, maybe dinner with friends that have changed my perspective, but not the world. Of course I'm talking about the Last Supper. Here we are 2000 years later and we are still talking about what happened at this dinner, people around the world are still remembering its significance in the ordinance of Communion and Christians and Catholics alike consider it one of, if not the most important aspect of what we do when we come together. However, in the 7 years I've been your lead pastor, I've never preached a full message on the Lord's Supper, of course once a month we practice this together and remind ourselves of Jesus' words, but today we get to go deeper into its origin and significance, and I pray the Spirit does the same thing in your heart that he did in mine as I studied this- cause me to fuller and richer sense of awe and worship of Jesus. Before we dive right into its significance we need to set up the context of this world changing moment Mark's gospel chapter 14. <sup>12</sup> *On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him,*

*"Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"*

Here we are on Thursday night of Passion Week which also happens to be the Jewish holiday known as the Passover which was celebrated each year. Now Galilean Jews celebrated their Passover on Thursday because they marked the Passover day from sunrise to sunrise. The Judean Jews in the South celebrated their Passover on Friday because they marked the Passover from sunset to sunset, which was the day that Jesus was crucified, and we will see why that is significant further into this message.<sup>1</sup> This Passover meal is the most important of all Jewish holidays. At the time of Jesus, for 1500 years since the Exodus, the Jewish people no matter where they were scattered celebrated the Passover and still do to this day. Curious how many of you have been to a Passover seder? Well all of you will have the opportunity on Thursday of Holy Week this year, led by one of our members, Dan Price who works with a Christian ministry Friends of Israel. You won't want to miss that. <sup>13</sup> *So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him.*

<sup>14</sup> *Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'*

<sup>15</sup> *He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."*

<sup>16</sup> *The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.* Now do you find this whole thing a little bizarre? Why the whole Mission Impossible vibe here? Why didn't Jesus just say- Dinner is at Bob's house on 13<sup>th</sup> and Market? The Bible doesn't say, but here's an educated guess. Judas, that's why. Jesus is shrewd as a viper,

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<sup>1</sup> We know this because of teaching in the Mishnah as well as the writings of Josephus the historian.

gentle as a dove. He knew that Judas was plotting his betrayal. And He knew that Passover would have been a perfect place for Him to be taken by the temple police under the leadership of the Sanhedrin, if He was in a room at night, the streets were empty, the place was pitch dark. It wouldn't be in public view. And in order to prevent Judas from having the opportunity to know where the place was and go tell the leaders of Israel, He made sure Judas didn't know, until they arrived there. The time for his betrayal was not yet at hand, everything would happen on God's sovereign, redemptive timetable, as much as Judas or the religious leaders thought they were in control. <sup>17</sup> *When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve.* <sup>18</sup> *While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."*

<sup>19</sup> *They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"* <sup>20</sup> *"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me."*

<sup>21</sup> *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."* Here, in the most intimate and meaningful displays of friendship and family among the Jewish people, the Passover meal, is the most devastating revelation of treachery. "One of you will betray me." Mark is subtle, he doesn't say the name, but all the readers would have known it was Judas, but the disciples? They were bewildered. One theologian said it like this, "For three years, Judas had been the most clever of hypocrites. When they preached, he preached. When they prayed, he prayed. Apparently, when they healed, he was out there healing. In their shock and disbelief, they had no clue."<sup>2</sup> Judas knew just what he was doing, and John's gospel tells us after he dipped his bread, he went out from the table, Satan entered him and planned his betrayal. As devastating as all this is, none of this disrupted a single thread of Jesus' mission that night, because what Judas and Satan intended for evil, God intended for our good.

Now with this context set, let's get into the significance of this meal. <sup>22</sup> *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."*

<sup>23</sup> *Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.* <sup>24</sup> *"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.*

<sup>25</sup> *"Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."* <sup>26</sup> *When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.* It's easy, if you have grown up in the church, to be so familiar with this text that we miss its magnitude. It's possible for you to have participated in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper and for you to not really know what it's about, or for it to merely have a transactional result in your life and not a transformational impact. So let's slow down and see the magnitude, and to do that we must understand what the Passover Seder is all about. I'm not going to go into detail

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, from sermon on Mark 14:12-25, [www.gty.org](http://www.gty.org)

about all of what happens at a **Passover Seder** because on Thursday of Passion Week- Holy Thursday, we are going to experience it together. But we do need to get a basic understanding.

The Passover was an annual meal that commemorated the defining moment of Israel: their delivery from bondage to 430 years of slavery in Egypt. The Passover meal has a specific form. There are 4 movements that include read and response, prayers, courses, and with each there are 4 cups of wine, and the last movement included a hymn that you sing together called the Hallel, which you see at the end of this text. Whoever was hosting the meal would typically bless the elements and when they got to the bread say, "This is the bread of our affliction, of the deliverance from our agony of slavery in Egypt." And so Jesus begins to bless the elements and explain the elements as you would expect, but instead of saying what had been said at every Passover meal for the last 1500 years, Jesus says something different. Instead of saying this is the bread of our affliction, he says this bread is my body. What is he saying? He's saying that this bread signifies not the affliction of the Jewish people, but his own affliction which will happen the very next day. This bread signifies not just economic and social deliverance from slavery, but cosmic soul deliverance and freedom from bondage to sin and death. And just as it was meant to be eaten the night before the commemoration of God's deliverance of the Israelites from bondage, Jesus and his disciples ate this meal the night before God would deliver humanity from sin and death. Do you see what he is saying so clearly through this meal? Jesus is saying that this deliverance and all the others in Jewish history all point to him. His death is defining moment in history.

Jesus then moves to the cup and in the same way, the cup goes back to the Passover story of Exodus 12. Remember in the Exodus story Pharaoh continued to harden his heart toward God and the Israelites, refusing to free them from slavery. And so God brought plagues upon them, but in the 10<sup>th</sup> and final plague, God is going to bring down divine justice upon human evil for one night in the form of the death of all the firstborn in Egypt. Now we need to understand, when he says this, he doesn't say, "Don't worry Israel, you will be skipped over because you are the good guys and the Egyptians are the bad guys." Divine justice is coming down on everyone because evil runs down the center of every human heart. We all participate in sin, we all are self-centered. The Israelites good works weren't going to save them, trying harder, being the right race, or being victims of the social hierarchy...none of that was going to save them. Because all have sinned, all of us deserve the justice of God against sin and rebellion, we all have participated in the brokenness of our world.

There was only one way to survive and be delivered from God's divine justice. They were told to kill a lamb, eat it that night and put the blood on the doorpost of their homes. When God's divine justice would come down that night, the only way anyone would be saved is by taking shelter under the blood of the lamb. I like how Tim Keller put it, **"That night, in every single home in Egypt, there was either a dead son or a dead lamb. One or the other. They were only saved on the basis of faith in a substitute."**

Now you may say, why would lamb's blood save anyone? How did it exempt them from God's justice? Well it wasn't the lamb...it was what the lamb represented. Let's go back to Jesus at

this Passover. This was the weirdest Passover in history because all Passover meals had wine and bread and every one of the gospels mentions that. But in no gospel is there mention of a main course at the meal, the lamb shank was always part of the Passover meal. What kind of meal is it that doesn't have a main course? If you were invited to a dinner party and their wasn't a main course, you would kicking your date under the table...

Well the answer is because the "lamb wasn't ON the table, the lamb was AT the table"<sup>3</sup>, it was Jesus Christ himself. Do you remember what John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus in the wilderness? "Behold, the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Where did he get that? I know we call people The GOAT now, but it was never a thing to call a human a lamb. He got this from that great Isaiah 53 messianic prophecy, "He was oppressed and afflicted, like a lamb to the slaughter, he poured out his life unto death." Jesus said, "This is the blood of the new covenant, poured out for many." And on the Friday of Passover, when the Judean Jews in Jerusalem celebrated Passover and slaughtered the lamb, Jesus THE lamb of God was crucified for us, and poured out his blood for us. He is the lamb that all the other millions of lambs of Passover over the last 1500 years represented. And this is why this meal was the last true Passover meal. This marks the end of the old covenant observance and the beginning of the new covenant, the last true Passover and the first Lord's Supper which the church has remembered ever since.

As we prepare ourselves to partake in the Lord's Supper this morning, there are two simple applications I want to leave you with. **#1 Take in this Gift of Deliverance.** Jesus said, take and eat, and drink it. A meal is the perfect imagery of what saving faith is all about. The is a gift that the disciples didn't earn, it was given to them, just as our deliverance our salvation isn't earned, it's a gift from God to us. However, we need to take it on for ourselves. The bread and wine have no effect on our bodies just by looking at it or acknowledging its existence. We have to take it in and absorb it for ourselves and allow it to work through our bodies. So it is with faith in Jesus' finished work on the cross. Faith is not just hearing people talk about what he did, or even just acknowledging his existence or the historicity of his death and resurrection. Saving faith is when we accept this gift personally, we absorb it for ourselves and trust this for ourselves. What have you done with this gift of deliverance?

**#2 Remember the cost of Deliverance. Luke 22:19 *Do this in remembrance of me.*** We do this to remember the cost of our deliverance- the pure, spotless lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Some of you still doubt that God forgives you, and still think there is something you need to do to earn it. Think on this- these same disciples that Jesus ate this meal with and became the leaders in the church are the same disciples that just a few hours later would betray him, deny him and abandon him at his greatest time of need. There is no sin you can commit that is outside of the reach of God's grace provided for you by his atonement. Take shelter under the blood of the lamb. Meditate, "It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished." Confession, thanksgiving.

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<sup>3</sup> Again, thanks to Tim Keller for the wording here.