

“The Passover Lamb”
The Gospel According to Mark 14:12-26
December 9th, 2018

A woman and her children began attending worship for the first time in their lives. They particularly loved the communion service. One day while babysitting for the mother, a friend fixed the mother’s children their favorite lunch of burritos and apple juice.

As the babysitter left the room, she heard one of the children, a 4-year old, begin to celebrate communion with her lunch items. She seemed to have memorized the words of institution quite well, except when it came to the cup. She was heard to say, “And Jesus took the cup, and He blessed it, and He gave God thanks for it, and He said, “Fill it with Folgers and wake ‘em up!” *Good theology, eh?*

Yesterday, at Pastor’s Class, I asked the youth if they could plan their favorite meal for supper, what they would want. Here are a couple of their responses (I’ll not identify who said what in order to protect the guilty!)

* Roast, Kyle Lloyd cookies, breadsticks, tacos (from various restaurants), triple-stuffed Oreos, Cookies and cream ice cream, Barq’s root beer, and Mountain Dew just to name some of their requests.

What would be your meal choice, especially if it were your last meal? (SLIDE) One man, then on death row (John Wayne Gacy) had this for his final meal: a dozen fried shrimp, a bucket of original recipe Kentucky Fried Chicken, French fries, and a pound of strawberries. *(SLIDE)* Another man (Timothy McVeigh) chose two pints of chocolate chip mint ice cream.

For over a year now, on Sunday mornings, we’ve been studying the New Testament’s second book, the Gospel According to Mark. In the passage of sacred Scripture we come to this morning **(Mark 14:12-26)**, we learn of Jesus’ final meal with His disciples before He was arrested, tried, sentenced, and executed. It’s the night before all that plays out; in what is known by many as “The Last Supper,” Jesus leaves with His Church a most important ordinance for the strengthening of our faith. That continuing gift is the Lord’s Supper. *(SLIDE)*

Mark 14:12-26:

¹² Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover *lamb*, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?”

¹³ And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. ¹⁴ Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’” ¹⁵ Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished *and* prepared; there make ready for us.”

¹⁶ So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷ In the evening He came with the twelve. ¹⁸ Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.”

¹⁹ And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, “*Is it I?*” And another *said, “Is it I?”*

²⁰ He answered and said to them, **“It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish.** ²¹ The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.”

²² And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

²³ Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴ And He said to them, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. ²⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

Poignantly in this last night with His disciples, Jesus instructs us that He is the Passover Lamb. We read of the institution of the Passover Meal in the second book of the Old Testament – **Exodus 12:1-13:16**. The Passover is the oldest of the Jewish festivals, originating over 3,000 years ago. It commemorates Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (the Exodus). The Exodus is the most excellent redemptive event in the life of God’s people. The Passover celebration retold the story of freedom from bondage that Yahweh worked for His people.

Verses 12-16 in today’s text highlight the preparations of securing a place in Jerusalem for Jesus and His disciples to partake of the Passover meal. Verse 12 references the killing of the Passover lamb; this was a year-old male lamb without spot or blemish. The blood of that lamb would be applied to the door frames and the lintel of the houses where the people gathered to eat the Passover. The presence of such blood duly placed compelled God’s avenging angel to “pass over” such homes, allowing the first born child of those families to remain alive. Those without the blood covering were afflicted by the death of their first born.

The lamb would then be roasted over a fire before it was eaten. Bitter herbs and bread made without yeast were also part of the meal. The Passover was to be eaten quickly remembering how the Israelites fled quickly from Egypt following their deliverer Moses who was led by God Himself in the presence of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day.

I’d have you note Jesus’ full control over the events leading up to His death in these verses. In reading verses 13-15, we could presume Jesus made prior arrangements of securing a place where He and the disciples would dine together. These instructions predicted what the disciples would find as they secured the room and prepared the Passover meal.

Then, in verse 18, as Jesus and the men were eating the Passover, Jesus predicted that one of His inner circle, those then eating with Him in that very room, would betray Him. In shocked disbelief, the disciples one-by-one ask if they are the one identified for such a travesty. Of course, we know from the text as it continues that Jesus spoke of Judas Iscariot. Jesus says of Judas in verse 21 – “...woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.”

I wonder what could’ve gone through Judas’ mind when Jesus said that of him. *Was his confidence shaken? Was he found out?* It must’ve been a most distressing time for him.

Unless, he was fully focused upon the money he'd get from the chief priests and scribes for outing Jesus.

There is a point of application here. **Jesus was in control because He was (and is) God.** He willingly submitted Himself to the will of God the Father; He was obedient to the point of death. Because He is God, He can be trusted in each and every circumstance. Take heart as we look to what the psalmist writes in **Psalm 56:3 & 4** – “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?”

Dear ones, the Bible teaches that God is sovereign, He is wise, and He is loving. Being exposed to such Scriptural truths, we must then choose whether to believe the truth about Jesus. Trusting God is a matter of faith, and faith is the fruit of the Spirit. Trusting God doesn't mean that we won't experience suffering. It means we believe that God is at work through our suffering for our ultimate good. One commentator notes, “A God who is in control when the foundations of His own earthly existence are crumbling is a God who can be trusted to sustain us when it appears our life is tumbling in.” (Hughes, 155)

There's another point I'd have you note. **There is great wisdom and insight in understanding the New Testament in light of what took place in the Old Testament.** As we come to grips with that truth, we realize that there is much continuity from Old Testament to the New. “The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed.” This famous statement by Saint Augustine expresses the remarkable way in which the two testaments of the Bible are closely interrelated with each other.

We see that as Jesus took two ordinary elements of the old order Passover Meal and applied them to Himself in establishing the new order Lord's Supper. In verse 22, we find Jesus' teaching regarding the bread of this sacred meal: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” The bread of the Passover meal would from that time forward be an element of the Lord's Supper which Jesus was then instituting for His Church since He was soon to depart from her. The bread of communion symbolizes “the body of Christ, broken for our sins” (*Catechism for Young Children*, Q. 134). We do not feast upon Jesus' flesh literally; He is present in this meal spiritually.

Then Jesus, took the cup of wine (according to various sources, there were four different cups drank from in the Passover meal). Jesus revealed that the cup of the Lord's Supper was also a symbol of something it pointed to – the blood of Jesus. Look again at verses 23 and 24, “Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.” Again, we do not drink Jesus' blood literally when we drink from the cup of the Lord's Supper. The cup symbolizes “the blood of Christ, shed for our salvation” (*Catechism for Young Children*, Q. 135).

Jesus was pointing to Himself as the Passover Lamb. John the Baptizer knew as much. This is the **Gospel According to John 1:29**, “...John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold! The Lamb

of God who takes away the sin of the world!” **I Corinthians 5:7** reads, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

There is another point of application here. In a few moments, we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. In light of the teaching of Scripture, you will have opportunity to **examine your life and practice**. The Apostle Paul says as much in his first letter to the Church at Corinth (**I Corinthians 11:28 & 29**), “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”

“The benefit of the Lord’s Supper depends entirely on the spirit and frame of mind in which we receive it...the sacrament will not do our souls the slightest good, if we do not receive it with repentance and faith. The bread which we there eat, and the wine which we there drink, have no power to do good to our souls, as medicine does good to our bodies, without the cooperation of our hearts and wills. They will not convey any blessing to us...if we do not receive them rightly, worthily, and with faith.” (Ryle, 307-8)

Earlier, we read question and answer # 97 of the *Shorter Catechism*. They teach that to properly receive the Lord’s Supper, we must understand what it represents. Further, we must have faith sufficient to believe that as the bread which we eat sustains our bodies, so the Bread of Life (Jesus) which this meal represents will sustain our souls.

Indeed, to benefit from partaking of communion, you *must* be a believer in Jesus Christ. This is the Table of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is not merely an end table upon which you rest your feet. Jesus communicates grace to His people as we gather to feast here in faith upon the elements of bread and wine, and what they represent – Jesus’ broken and bleeding for the people He came to earth to save.

In 1927, the Sudan Interior Mission sent missionaries to evangelize the Wallamos, a wild tribe who worshipped Satan. During its annual “Passover” the Wallamos sacrificed a bull to Satan, sprinkling its blood on the doorposts of their houses and serving its raw flesh to every member of their families.

Eventually, a small church was established, but missionary labor was interrupted when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935. When Italian troops reached tribal areas, they demanded SIM leave. When SIM had arrived not a single Wallamos had known of Christ. Now after 9 years, 48 native believers gathered around the missionaries as they worshipped once last time. They shared the Lord’s Supper. Then the 26 SIM missionaries boarded army trucks for evacuation.

It wasn’t until July 4th, 1943 that the missionaries were able to return. What they found almost defies belief. Church leaders were given 100 lashes, and one was given 400. They were unable to lie on their backs for months. Several had died. One of them was beaten in public, yet he preached to the crowds between lashes. Another was stripped in the marketplace and flogged with a hippo-hide whip, bravely shouting out the gospel. Conversions multiplied and tribal villages began sending missionaries to other villages. Instead of 48 believers, **the returning missionaries now found...18,000!**