

## Sermon – Mark 14:12-26

### Jesus Fulfills the Passover

It was such an important meal for Jewish people. Thousands streamed to Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices at the temple. It was Independence Day in Jerusalem. The disciples knew that Jesus was planning on celebrating too, but I wonder if any of them realized that they would be celebrating a Passover meal like they would tonight. Jesus would be fulfilling the Passover. He takes this traditional meal with a lamb, and transforms it into a meal with THE LAMB.

In the Old Testament lesson we heard about how the angel of death passed over every house with blood on its door posts. God used the sacrifice of a lamb to rescue his people from their slavery in Egypt. Then God instructed them to observe the Passover year after year. They were to go to the temple with thousands of other Jewish men and sacrifice a 1 year old lamb without any blemishes or defects. The priests would collect the blood in a bowl and sprinkle it on the altar. I can't even imagine the scene. There would be so much blood and so much death. All of it shouting loud and clear that, "Without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of sins." Yet all of the blood of all of these lambs cannot actually take away any of our sins. It all points to the greater sacrifice of Christ.

But I wonder how many had forgotten about how this meal pointed to something better? Had this meal with a lamb become ritual and routine? Had it become a way to work your way into God's love? Was it just another rule to follow for many? A tradition devoid of meaning?

Yet for Jesus, this was not just another obligatory festival. This was a promise he came to fulfill. His disciples came to him that night, asking where they should prepare for the Passover. And Jesus was prepared. We see his power as the true God as he reveals how the events of the evening would unfold. It was just like when he told them to untie a donkey on Palm Sunday. The two disciples, Peter and John, went out to prepare the meal, and everything happened just as Jesus said it would. I imagine that it bolstered their faith as Jesus once again reveals himself as the all-knowing God.

So Peter and John prepare the meal, laying out the unleavened bread on the table with the bitter herbs, roasting the lamb over a fire, and arranging the cups for wine. That evening, Jesus and the 12 would return for their Last Supper together before he was sacrificed for the sins of the world. **The disciples are not just having dinner of lamb that symbolizes freedom, but tonight they are having a new meal with THE LAMB who gives freedom.**

As the sun was preparing to set, the Lamb of God enters the room with his disciples, and they sit down to eat this Last Supper. But as they are eating, Jesus says something they weren't

prepared to hear. “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” Jesus calls Judas to repent, but Judas had already rejected the Lamb of God. He rejected the Gospel, and he walks out into the darkness to do his evil work. He will hand over the Savior tonight. But notice that all of the disciples were deeply troubled by this statement. They were saddened and asked, “Surely not I?” It’s not going to be me is it? Can they trust themselves to remain faithful?

Can we? Can we trust ourselves to remain faithful? Are you strong enough to stand up for Jesus when it means rejection from friends? Can we remain faithful when it means giving up our time that is so precious to us? We will remain faithful when things in our life are going so well that we don’t feel like we need the Lamb of God? “Surely not I?” In a few hours on the Mount of Olives, all of the disciples will run away. On our own we would too, there is no way we could remain faithful. We betray Jesus with our sins every day. On our own we don’t have the strength or fortitude to press on.

But Jesus did have the strength to finish his journey to the cross. He knows the depth of his approaching passion. He would be arrested, beaten, mocked, and crucified. He would suffer hell for us. But he still arranges to have this meal with his friends before he dies. Jesus knows the struggles his disciples will face in just a few hours. He knows the struggles with guilt and fear they are having right now. He knows the persecution they will face after he returns to heaven, so he says something else this night they were not **prepared** to hear.

Instead of all of the usual Passover blessings and recitations, Jesus intersperses something new. He gives thanks for the bread, breaks it and distributes it to his disciples saying, “This is my body.” He gives thanks and passes around his cup of wine saying, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”

Knowing that he is about to die, Jesus leaves the disciples and he leaves the Church with something very special. - Maybe you have worked on a will before. Maybe you have planned out how your loved ones will be taken care of when you’re gone. Well, Jesus has no earthly possessions to give at this Last Supper; instead he gives his disciples something far better - himself, his body and blood. He leaves for us meal that he promises will strengthen our faith and give us the forgiveness of sins. Jesus writes our names in his will and promises that all the blessings of forgiveness are ours. Heaven is our inheritance, and we are heirs of God himself.

Jesus takes this meal that the Jews were obligated to follow in the law, and he makes it new. There is no need to slay the Passover lamb after this night. Our Passover Lamb has been slain once for all time. There is no need to eat bitter herbs that remind us of slavery, we have been freed from all the guilt of our sins that had enslaved us. Jesus is the giver of this new

meal and he is also the gift. He institutes a new supper for his disciples to follow until he comes again. Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me." And as we come together tonight we do remember him, but is so much more than that. It's not our hearts going up to meet with God in remembrance, but it is God coming down in grace. Tonight too, Jesus gives us his body and blood to forgive all of our sins. Holy Communion is not just a symbol of Jesus' death, but it is the real presence of Jesus in, with and under the bread and wine.

Holy Communion is not a rule that we follow because Jesus tells us to. It's not part of the old covenant where God says do this or else, but this is the blood of the new covenant that we drink tonight. This is the gospel. This is Jesus saying to you personally tonight, "I have a new agreement to make with you. It's not a contract that says if you obey me, I will bless you. No it's a new one-sided covenant in my blood. I will forgive your wickedness and remember your sins no more. You will do nothing. It's a gift. Jesus can offer this because this very blood was poured out on Calvary, not just for these disciples, but for many people. In fact the Bible makes it clear this great number of people includes all people of all time. The Lamb of God came to take away the sins of the world. You are part of the many - you are forgiven.

But maybe sometimes your mind just can't comprehend this forgiveness? You look over your life and start to see the failures and the sins. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus gives us his love such a concrete tangible way. If you are weak and struggling - look at the price of your forgiveness! His body and blood. See it with your eyes, taste it with your mouth. Know that you are forgiven.

Do you ever worry that you might not have the fortitude to press on to the end? Do you see yourselves with the disciples praying - "Surely not I Lord?" Don't worry, don't be sad, but have joy. You don't have fortitude to finish strong, but Christ did. He did have the strength to endure until the end. His perfect life replaces our guilty life, his innocent death gives us life forever, his body and blood give us assurance of forgiveness, life and salvation. Because Jesus did press on to the end, we have the promise that we will eat and drink again with Christ in heaven at the wedding feast of the Lamb. We have a little taste of that promise tonight.

The Lord's Supper helps us remember Christ's sacrifice, and as we remember, we lift our eyes to the hills in thanksgiving. Our help comes from the Lord. Keep your eyes on the Lord Jesus as he sings a hymn with his disciples and then as he walks down the hill from Jerusalem, through the valley and back up to the Mount of Olives. There we see Jesus prepared to meet his betrayer. Prepared to reach out to him one more time. Prepared to obey his Father's will no matter what the cost. Prepared to drink his cup of suffering. Tomorrow we will lift our eyes to Mount Calvary.