

**Luke 22:7-20**

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it." They asked him, "Where do you want us to make preparations for it?" "Listen," he said to them, "when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters and say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"'" He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there."

So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal. When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

**The Gospel of our Lord**

## Maundy Thursday

Mark 14:12-26

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Then came the day of unleavened bread, on which the Passover Lamb had to be sacrificed. The day the Lamb had to be sacrificed. The unblemished lamb was sacrificed.

Maundy Thursday is grounded in the emphasis of that first Passover. Enslaved for centuries, the chosen people of God, were forced to work harder and harder with fewer and fewer resources. Finally at their breaking point they cried out to God for freedom from his pain. River to Blood, frogs, gnats, flies, disease, boils, hail, locusts, darkness - Nine Plagues later Moses still hadn't gotten Pharaoh to let his people go. Then finally on the tenth, the mourning and wailing was heard throughout Egypt, because the first borns had all been killed, died from pharaoh's oldest son to the shepherds youngest goats. To protect themselves from this angel of death that was passing over the people of God were told to take the unblemished lamb and slaughter it, eat the meat - all of it and from the blood that is shed mark the doorposts of their homes. Then the promise was that death would not hurt those protected by the blood of the sacrificial lamb. Instead Death would Pass-Over their home and spare the inhabitants and free them from bondage and slavery.

And each year on the day they would stop and celebrate the festival of Passover, so that the people would never forget that out of bitterness and weeping, through the blood of the sacrificial lamb, the people were saved and death had no hold over them. And so the formal Seder became tradition. On the first night of Passover (which the festival was seven days long) the people would gather with the traditional Seder meal, the plates, and the matzah, the boiled egg, the sweet honey, the bitter herbs, the salt water, the dried bones, the four glasses of wine. For thousands of years the people of God would gather and follow this routine each year; eat this – pray that, say this and drink that, eat this and sing that, eat this and drink that, all done to remember the freedom that had been won for them from captivity. Every year they are to do this and remember. But could such a high moment of personal and national drama ever become too routine?

How about the Lord's Supper. This is the night the Lord stood at that traditional Passover meal and took one of the four cups of the Seder and blessed it and passed it around saying this is the new covenant, drink from it because this is my blood shed for you. And he took some of the Matzah bread from the Seder traditional plate and blessed it and broke it and gave it to all so that it was his very body given for all people. This is the very night we remember and hold sacred this

last meal of communion with our Lord, does it become too routine for us? Perhaps that is why so many people are not here tonight, because they just take communion with the Lord for granted. It just is another Thursday. Just another night to do other things.

Seldom do you see people passionate about coming to the Lord's table, excited about taking part in a meal that has gone on since Jesus and continues on until we all stand before the throne of God. It is the one meal that everyone is invited to, from rich to poor, from old to young, from famous to unknown. The meaning and the intent, the setting and drama of this gift that we celebrate this night, this sacrifice is so central to our entire faith and hope and yet to most we never really give it a passing thought and to some no thought at all.

Jesus commands that his followers who have ears, listen. We have ears and so need to listen. We also have eyes and so need to see. We have feeling so we need to touch, taste, smell. In other words we need to recover the sense of wonder, awe, holiness, sacredness that is the Holy Eucharist.

For well over a thousand years the people knew that the shedding of blood was necessary for them to be freed from bondage. By the sacrifice of the lamb and the marking of the blood they were saved from death. This they knew and believed. Even the early Christians church had seen and knew full well the slaughter of the Passover lambs. It was a hallmark holiday for them. They heard the crowds, the families would gather. They would have calls to worship, the blood would run in the temple gutters. They knew what baked bread smelled like and they knew the taste of bitterness. But during that one Passover meal in the Capital City of Jerusalem, a man named Jesus, the son of a carpenter named Joseph and a mother named Mary stood up in a upper room reserved for them and he took the bread and cup and said this Passover – I AM THE LAMB, I AM THE SACRIFICE, MY BODY AND MY BLOOD HAS BEEN POURED OUT FOR YOU!

After centuries upon centuries of their ancestor's celebration, after remembrance after remembrance at their annual Passover, these few gathered faithful heard Jesus say this is the NEW COVENANT. Drink from this cup it is my blood given for you. Eat this is my body given for you.

The words of God were in their minds – "I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." These same words of the prophet should still be resonating in our minds, when we take part in this new covenant, this new promise that God has offered his own body for us. That through faith God gives us a freedom from death that has no end. The cup is poured out for you and is the new covenant in his blood, a promise that is everlasting and can never be destroyed.

In this meal that we take part in tonight, just like all the other times, it does not become routine or ordinary, because we take this meal as ones who know that in this meal is love. Jesus

declares himself for everybody. This meal of meals is the climax of all and every dinner party, it is a meal for sinners each and every day, so that we may enter into that loving connection with God, forgiven and accepted. We are redeemed and promised the very presence of God in this meal. It is not something to be taken lightly, but with thanksgiving and joy. It is the gift of God, for all people.

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and said this is my body given for you. This is my cup given for you. Take and eat Take and Drink this is the new covenant in my blood. The Lord's supper that we remember this night and every week is important, is needed and is a passion filled supper that is everlasting. My you receive that gift this night as we gather on the night that Jesus held that cup and that bread and said this I am doing for you.

Amen.

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty God, you have sent Jesus Christ to overcome all hardships and all temptations, even satan and death itself. He overcame all these things to win for us a place in your eternal kingdom. Continue to bless us with that hope and assurance, so that all stumbling blocks may be removed from our journey of faith. Send your spirit of knowledge and guidance to taken away all worries and temptations so that your creation may do as you will.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer..

O Heavenly Father, we ask that you bless us with the mind of Christ so that we may be his partners in welcoming others into your lift of grace and forgiveness. In a world of violence and war, we need your blessing of peace. In a world filled with hatred and envy and guilt, we need your forgiveness. In a world filled with disasters both manmade and natural where so many are suffering we need you to tend to us and keep us. Lord Bless us this day with your Love, grace, forgiveness and peace.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer.

God, stretch out your saving hand to those who are sick. With your strong love, comfort the lonely, the oppressed, and all who suffer. Give courage to those facing surgery. Give healing to those who are afflicted. Give peace to those troubled both physically and mentally. Impart your Holy Comforter to be with them in their times of need. Especially we remember today our hospitalized, our homebound and all those we name now in our prayers to you....

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for this community of faithful; teach us to use the many gifts you have given us for the common mission of your Church. Take and use us as your witnesses, as your servants in this community and beyond to spread your word, to share your good news, to welcome the stranger and lift up those torn down by hatred and sin. Lift up your face and shine upon us and send us forth as your witnesses of that glory now and forever.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Into your hands, o Lord we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.