

Overflow - Part 2

Luke 22:7-27

1. The one God calls, God equips.
2. The one who answers, engages.
3. The one who is greatest, serves.

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Luke 22:7-27¹

Today is the second Sunday in our Lenten series we are calling "Overflow." Our Sunday sermons correspond to the Scripture readings in the devotional book we are using, called "My Cup Runneth Over." You can pick one up at the Welcome Center in either Spanish or English, and you can do the daily readings with all of us – we'll be doing this until Easter.

The season of Lent is intended to help us remember the journey that Jesus made in his last forty days toward the cross. So we are spending time in our readings and on Sundays inserting ourselves into that story in order to remember what Jesus has done for us.

I want to say thank you to Pastor Div for starting off our series last Sunday while I was in Idaho with the NNU Board of Trustees. His call to discipleship really helped us get our minds and hearts and wills in the place of surrender to Jesus so we can be like Christ in our actions and attitudes.

This morning we are following Jesus in Jerusalem as he makes preparations for what we call the Last Supper – the Passover meal with his disciples, after which Jesus was arrested, tortured, and then crucified the next day.

We're picking up the story in Luke's account in chapter twenty-two. I want to read this passage for us, but can I ask us to show honor to God and His Word by standing?

Thank you! This is what it says:

The Day of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John with this task: "Go and prepare for us to eat the Passover meal."

They said to him, "Where do you want us to prepare it?"

Jesus replied, "When you go into the city, a man carrying a water jar will meet you. Follow him to the house he enters. Say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher says to you, "Where is the guestroom where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?"'" He will show you a large upstairs room, already furnished. Make preparations there." They went and found everything just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

When the time came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles joined him. He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I tell you; I won't eat it until it is fulfilled in God's kingdom." After taking a cup

¹ Resources:

David A. Neale, *Luke 9-24: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition (New Beacon Bible Commentary)* (Beacon Hill Press, KC, 2013)

My Cup Runneth Over Pastor's Resource, The Foundry Publishing, 2024

and giving thanks, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. I tell you that from now on I won't drink from the fruit of the vine until God's kingdom has come." After taking the bread and giving 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." In the same way, he took the cup after the meal and said, "This cup is the new covenant by my blood, which is poured out for you.

"But look! My betrayer is with me; his hand is on this table. The Human One goes just as it has been determined. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays him." They began to argue among themselves about which of them it could possibly be who would do this.

An argument broke out among the disciples over which one of them should be regarded as the greatest.

But Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles rule over their subjects, and those in authority over them are called 'friends of the people.' But that's not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant. So which one is greater, the one who is seated at the table or the one who serves at the table? Isn't it the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:7-27, niv)

We stand to honor God's Word, but you can sit down for my words! I submit to the Holy Spirit, so that he can speak through me to each of us.

This may be the first time I've preached on the Last Supper when we didn't also have communion at the same time! We just shared communion two weeks ago, and we are going to do so again in a few weeks on Palm Sunday.

By the way, on Palm Sunday we will have a representative from Jews for Jesus here to walk us through the entire Jewish Passover supper. How many have never seen that presentation before? You really need to be with us for that. The Passover Supper, which is an annual sacrament that Jews practice to this very day, began in the Exodus story when God led his people out of slavery in Egypt. The ritual of Passover describes and remembers their experience in slavery and their deliverance. But God built into that Jewish ritual of Passover a declaration of the arrival and Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is profound. I'm telling you that every part of it talks about God's salvation plan that was fulfilled in Jesus. To this day Jews practice Passover every year, and every year they proclaim Jesus, and they don't even know it. Please join us on Palm Sunday.

But think about how incredible that experience was for Jesus and his disciples – to declare in that Passover the very thing that it had all pointed to for centuries!

So our passage begins as they are making preparations. The Passover lamb had to be sacrificed, and that was to happen at dusk. For the Jews, dusk was the beginning of the new day. So even though this was a Thursday night to us, it was the beginning of Friday for them.

In this story, the falling dark of night is a metaphor for the spiritual darkness that looms around them and now descends on all of them – the sadness and the evil that is about to be launched.

You might ask why this sort of clandestine approach to the preparations – sending Peter and John to find a stranger carrying a jug of water and all that. Jesus knew his enemies were looking for him to kill him, but it was important for him to get this last Passover meal with his disciples. This was the inauguration of the new covenant. So Jesus couldn't just walk into Jerusalem in daylight and prepare for the Passover.

The disciples are led to a man carrying a jar of water. This would have been something very unusual. Carrying water was the job of women, not men. Jesus knew that the man who had the upper room they could use, would for whatever reason be carrying a jug of water just when the disciples ran into him. Did Jesus already know the man? We don't really know, but it's most likely that the man was at least sympathetic to Jesus, if not one of his followers.

So here's the first thing you and I can learn for our own Christian lives from Peter and John: if you are the disciple that Div told you about last week, if you and I are truly following Jesus, we are sent out into the world to accomplish things for him. Don't kid yourself: you are not a Christian so your life will be more comfortable, and you will have a better sense of self-worth. Following Jesus is not a self-help program. You are on mission for Christ in this world. You are bringing the Kingdom of God everywhere you go. If you and I take that seriously, there are going to be divinely arranged opportunities that we didn't know about, but Jesus does. Jesus is going to bring people into your life, into your traffic pattern, that will serve to make arrangements for Jesus to move into new spaces. It might not make sense to you, you might not even know it's happening. But if you give your life to him in everything, then you start your day saying, "Jesus, what do you want me to do for you today?" God is calling you to do things for him every day. Will you answer his call? But here's the cool thing...

The one God calls, God equips.

When God calls us to do something, God goes ahead of us to help prepare our way.

Jesus told the disciples exactly where to go and whom to talk to in order to find a space for the Passover meal. They would still have a lot of work to set up and prepare the meal, but Jesus handled the biggest unknown, which was where to set up.

God doesn't send us out into the world without any guidance or providence. God sends us into the world knowing exactly where we need to go and who he wants us to cross paths with, and he will guide us along the way to get there.

Those of us in this room who are believers in Jesus could probably share story after story about times when God provided exactly what was needed when it was needed – right? How many of you have had a time that God provided exactly what was needed exactly when it was needed?

Remembering those stories encourages us and strengthens our faith as we follow Jesus and find new challenges and new uncertainties and new trials and tribulations. Hasn't it been great these last several weeks to hear each other's stories on the video testimonies, and to read those stories on the wall over there? They really do inspire us to keep answering God's call.

When I became a Christian, it was at the end of my eleventh-grade year of high school. I had been thinking that I would go to Oregon State to become a high school health and PE teacher and coach. But over my senior year, I began to sense that God was calling me into ministry. I had no idea what a call was or what it meant – just that maybe that was what I was supposed to do. I decided to go to Northwest Nazarene University (except back then it was a college) and go into ministry. I figured if it turned out I was wrong, I could switch to education, because they had an excellent education program. Still do, among the many, many others, like business, engineering, nursing, counseling – NNU has 64 different undergrad degrees and 24 different graduate degrees.

So at 18 I answered God's call to go into ministry, not knowing how it was going to happen. Right away, God intersected my life with Dr. Irving Laird, who became a mentor to me. There have been others, too, like Dr. Ray Lindley and Dr. Rich Hagood and Dr. Joel Pearsall. But Doc, as we called him, began discipling me in my Christian life and my call. Before my junior year I spent the summer doing my ministry internship, but when I came back to school, I learned that there had been a mix up and I was going to be \$456 short on my tuition. Back then, that was over 20% of the total semester bill. My parents didn't have money saved for me for college and I was maxed out on loans and grants. If I didn't come up with the money by the end of the week, I'd have to drop out of college. If they would've allowed me to, I could've paid it off by the end of the semester, because I had a part time job. But they said no, I had to have it by the end of the week. All week I prayed, but there was nothing I could do. I began to wonder if I was really called into ministry after all. Maybe this was God's way of saying I needed to switch majors. The business office closed at 4:30 on Friday, so at 4 o'clock I started making my way across campus. By 4:15 I was about ten yards from the business office when I ran into a friend of mine who was walking out. He asked me how I was doing, so I told him I was going to have to drop out. My friend's family had money, and he said "My dad always writes a check for the amount I need for each semester. But for some reason, he wrote a check for too much this time. (remember, I needed \$456)" My friend said, "I have an extra \$500. How much do you need? If you can pay me back by the end of the semester, that would be fine." He walked back in with me, we transferred the money, and I was able to pay him back from my part time job. The God who called me, equipped me!

Answering the call of God is not about being a pastor – it's about following Jesus. And, it's not just about material resources, either. God equips us through friends and mentors, through circumstances that teach us things, and through his Word and Spirit leading us. The one God calls, God equips.

It's important to realize though that the Passover supper with Jesus would not have happened if Peter and John had not done what Jesus told them to. Those times that God provided for you, it wasn't because you were just sitting around waiting for God to step in and do everything. It happens because we have a part to play in what God is doing in our lives and in our world...

The one who answers God's call, **engages** in it.

The arrangement of the upper room happened because Peter and John *went* – they went into the city, even though it didn't make a lot of sense to them, and they didn't know where they'd end up.

You and I have a part to play in God's call.

One of the things you will learn at that Palm Sunday Passover presentation is that preparation for the Passover is way more than just a meal. Peter and John had to do more than just find a room to meet in.

One of the things that happens at every meal is that the entire house must be swept through to remove every trace of yeast in the house. Yeast was symbolic for sin and the way it spreads and grows in a life, in a family, in a church community. So one of the things that you and I must do if we are going to get serious about engaging in God's call in our lives is that we must pray and examine the room of our lives, and if we find any trace of sin in our lives we need to confess it to God and repent of it – turn our backs on it.

Prayer

But there's more to it than that – we are not just turning our backs on sin. The opposite direction of sin is Jesus. When you turn your back on sin, you are turning TO Jesus. You are committing to following him, and then going where he tells you to go, living like he tells you to live, saying what he tells you to say. You are committing yourself to be engaged in Christ's mission in this world.

One of my favorite books of the Bible is Ezra-Nehemiah. In our Bibles it is two books, but in the original Hebrew Bible it was one book, divided by two scrolls (they didn't have long enough scrolls to make it into one). It is an amazing story of leadership and community as God's people made their way back from exile in Babylon. It has both good and bad examples – it really teaches us what to do and what not to do. One of the good examples is when the people were rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem. While they were doing it, their enemies were surrounding them and threatening to attack them. In Nehemiah chapter four, we're told what they did in response to this threat. It says:

“So we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet the threat.”
(Nehemiah 4:9, niv)

They could have just prayed, and hoped God would rescue them. But that wasn't God's plan – he works WITH US in the building of his Kingdom. He wants us to be engaged. They could also have just posted a guard and not prayed about it. Then they would have been doing it all in their own strength, their own efforts, their own wisdom. And they would have failed (there are lots of stories in the Old Testament showing the times they failed because they didn't depend on God). Instead, they did both – they answered God's call, and in faith trusted him to equip them. And then they engaged in the work.

The one God calls, God equips. The one who answers, engages in the call.

So back to our story, Peter and John did what Jesus told them to, and they found the man with the water jug in Jerusalem, and he led them to an upper room where they could make arrangements for the Passover meal – what would become the Lord's Supper.

Jesus and all the disciples gather in that upper room, and you can read about the actual upper room in today's daily devotional from the book, if you haven't already. It is still there. Shelly and I have been in that room. It's incredible.

In that room, the disciples had this powerful Passover that Jesus clearly says will now have an entirely new meaning; that it is now going to be fulfilled after all those centuries of waiting, and it would be fulfilled by Jesus becoming the sacrificed Passover Lamb.

But for that to happen, one of their own will betray Jesus. The disciples begin to argue about which one of them is going to do that. And somehow – I have no idea how – the argument shifts from who will betray Jesus to which one of them is the greatest – which one is the most important.

Can you imagine? Jesus says, "One of you is going to betray me, and I'm going to be killed in a horrible, torturous way." "Oh man, that's horrible. Who would do that to you Jesus? I know I wouldn't. That's because I'm the most important one here. I am the greatest!"

I can just see Jesus smacking his forehead!

So once again, Jesus patiently corrects them, and tells them that...

The one who is greatest, serves.

While Jesus was preparing to lay down his life for everyone, the disciples were debating between themselves which of them was the greatest.

They knew something was going to happen. And yet even though Jesus spoke about what was coming in very plain and clear language, they *still* didn't understand.

That's because they weren't preparing for Jesus to sacrifice himself. Instead they thought they were about to be the beneficiaries of a triumphant victory. They thought Jesus was about to become the King/Dictator in Chief who would rule over all the world, with his disciples holding court in his Kingdom. Soon (they thought), the Romans would be under their control. Soon (they thought), the religious leaders under whom they suffered so much spiritual abuse would be put in their place. These fishermen and tax collectors were about to rule the world! (with Jesus, of course.)

There *was* about to be a triumphal victory, that's for sure, but it wasn't going to be the way they thought it would happen.

The disciples were grasping for power and position. All too often, we still do that today. We think our president of choice is God's elect to put us in power and control. Or the one in power is Satan incarnate so we have to fight to get *back* into power. In our own lives we strive to get that corner office or that higher paycheck or that speck of gossip that we can use to ruin the person we don't like. We think we've got the right answers, so we undermine things until we get our way. We fight to get the most influence we can, and we don't even notice the movement of God's Spirit because we're busy arguing over who's the best.

Jesus told the disciples that the one who serves is the one who is the greatest. Jesus knew he was about to suffer, and the disciples were being selfish, so, incredibly, he got up from

the table, grabbed a towel and washbasin, and he washed the feet of his disciples (see John 13). He didn't concern himself with worry over what was ahead. He did not refuse to wash Judas's feet. Instead, he knelt and washed the dirty, stinky feet of all of his disciples.

Jesus demonstrated by example that true greatness is found in serving others, even when that requires doing an unpleasant task.

The disciples' lack of humility in Luke stands in sharp contrast with Jesus's humility. He was preparing to offer himself up as a sacrifice while they argued about who was better. Even so, he knelt and served them by washing their feet.

We are supposed to follow Jesus's example.

When I was the pastor of our Nazarene Church in Mountain Home, Idaho, it was an interesting community. Because there was an Air Force base about ten miles out of town, that little town of 5000 people in Southeastern Idaho was actually quite diverse, because there were soldiers from all over the country. For many of them, military service provided a way up and out of their circumstances, and so many of them were black. Only 1% of the entire state of Idaho's population is black, and I'm pretty sure that all but a handful lived in Mountain Home.

So even then, you can imagine that they were not treated well. One friend of mine in the church was a guy named Cameron. He was a retired Airman and had been in that town for years. He started and raised his family there. He and I have the same birthday and year. We called ourselves brothers from another mother, because Cameron is black and I'm – well, I don't know if you can tell but I'm not. He told me stories of how he and his family had been treated over the years, and it was horrifying and shocking. Cameron's wife, Mary Ellen is white, so that made it even worse in some people's eyes. There was no question that I was among those with power and privilege, and Cameron had fought for his place.

One day, when I was working in my office, Cameron came to see me. We sat down in the chairs across from each other to talk. But Cameron stopped me, got up, walked out of my office, and walked back in with a bowl of water and a towel. He knelt on the ground in front of me and began taking off my shoes and socks. I protested and told him to stop – if anything, I should be doing this for him. But he insisted. He said, you have to let me do what Jesus told me to do for you. I stopped protesting, and he washed my feet. He finished, he prayed for me, hugged me, and left my office. *I* represented people who had been horrible to him, and he stooped down to serve *me*.

That's what Jesus did for us, and that is what he calls us to do. He calls us, equips us, and expects us to be engaged in his work. And that engagement looks like a servant. We're called to humble ourselves with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we're not meant to see one another as competition but as teammates in God's kingdom. We serve alongside, not against.

You have a choice today. Will you humble yourself to go where God is leading? Will you stoop down to the floor, pick up a rag, and wash the feet (whether literally or metaphorically) of someone else? Or will you, like the disciples that day, puff yourself up and jockey for position?

Jesus is clear in his example of what we're supposed to do and who we're supposed to be.

Let us be faithful in imitating him.

Prayer

Benediction

May the God of peace, who brought back the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, from the dead by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with every good thing to do his will, by developing in us what pleases him through Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory forever and always. Amen.

(Hebrews 13:20-21, ceb)