

April 21, 2011
Sermon for Maundy Thursday
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 14:22-25 (ESV)

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “**Take; this is my body.**” ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, “**This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.**” ²⁵ **Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”**

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

All of us have particular family traditions that center around the dining table. Be it Thanksgiving, Christmas or Easter; there might be a traditional table cloth or a particular meal and dessert. Even the smells remind you of a room full of loved ones.

You feel close, you feel accepted, forgiven and loved. This is your family, some by blood, some by friendship; either way, you belong.

No doubt, our Lord Jesus, true Man as well as true God, remembered things like this too. He probably remembered the Passover meal traditions of His childhood. How often as a boy had He celebrated the Passover meal with Joseph and Mary and the other children. He could remember the different parts of the meal, the matzoh bread, the lamb, the wine, the bitter herbs. I'm sure He felt close to His family. And close to God as they ate this meal of remembrance.

At Passover, all Jews remember. They remember that they are family, one with another. More than that, they are an Israelite family, members of God's first chosen people. They remember how God prepared this meal as a meal of acceptance and how God personally invited them to attend.

They remember the first Passover meal, and just before that Passover when God said to their ancestors: ³*I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ...* ⁴*I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.* ⁵*Moreover, I have heard the*

groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. ... 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God ... Exodus 6:3-7 (ESV)

Yet, at that time they were slaves – the lowest of the low. Were they really a people, let alone God's chosen people? Or merely a collection of separate individuals, in slavery, being used by others? They couldn't help but wonder if God existed. Certainly they questioned whether God knew about them and cared about them. Had God really made them His special people by His covenant with Abraham? As they sat in slavery, it didn't seem so.

On Passover night, they got their answer...directly from God. As He rescued them from slavery, they were told to eat a meal together, a meal to remember. Put the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts, and eat its meat along with the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread.

That night, God kept His covenant. He killed every firstborn in every Egyptian home, from royalty to servants, but he spared every person in every Hebrew home marked by the blood of the lamb. That night, God made them His family. He ordered them, as one people, to leave their overlords. They hurried out of Egypt. Together they crossed the Red Sea. Together they received God's way of life at Mt. Sinai. Together they crossed the desert, God leading them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Together, God and His people entered the promised land.

The birth of their nation began at the Passover meal. Every year after that, God invited them to this meal of acceptance to remember. As on family, they ate the body of the slain lamb and drank the wine of their suffering, knowing that they were one in suffering.

On Maundy Thursday, some two thousand years ago, Jesus and His disciples gathered in the upper room together to eat the Passover meal of God's acceptance and to remember. Jesus knew what was about to happen. Judas would betray Him. Peter would deny Him. The disciples would forsake Him. They were sinners...weak...slaves to sin. And soon they would wonder, "Are we, traitors and deniers and forsakers, really God's beloved children? How can He accept the likes of us? Does Jesus still claim us as His brothers? How? How can we be a part of His family any longer after what we have done?"

Jesus looked around the upper room that night, the night in which He was betrayed, and knowing what they would soon do, He said: *"I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."* Luke 22:15 (ESV)

Our loving Lord, knowing what He was about to do...and even more so, knowing what they were going to do too, Jesus treats them like family, encouraging them now, because He knows where their thoughts will be later. He wanted them to understand that even though they failed and would wonder if God would still call these failures His family.

So Jesus invites them to eat this meal of God's forgiveness and acceptance. And Jesus continues telling them: *"Truly, I say to you, I will not drink*

again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” Mark 14:25 (ESV)

This was Jesus last supper on earth, but he told them that it was not His last supper forever, because His home is in heaven...and so is theirs, ...and yours., forever.

Jesus says to us that we are to eat His Holy Supper together as a family. We eat the bread, that is His true body, in remembrance of Him. His body, broken for you for the forgiveness of sins. The wine is His true blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many. He calls us to remember His blood, shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins. In eating the meal of His forgiveness of sins, we are one. We are His family forever. Whether we are liars, stealers, murderers or betrayers, we are Jesus' forgiven family through repentance of our sins and faith in Him as our Savior.

After the first Passover meal, God swept into action, rescuing the Israelites from their slave masters.

After the Last Supper, the final Passover meal, God delivered His one and only son into the hands of sinners, who were slaves themselves. Slaves to sin. That night, Jesus was betrayed and arrested. The next day the disciples saw His body broken and His blood shed on the cross.

Did they make the connection that we have made? His body broken as the bread was broken the night before? His blood shed as the grapes had shed the juice which became the wine served the night before? Or were they wrapped up in their own sins and fears that all they could do was run and hide?

But you see, it was not required for them to make a connection or to fully understand, only to believe that Jesus had died for their sins. They witnessed His life given for them so that they could be forgiven and accepted into the family of God.

It is this saving action that we remember this evening, and as often as we eat and drink together (1 Cor. 11:25) In the eating of this consecrated bread and the drinking of this consecrated wine, we enter into the mystery of communion with God.

Now is the time. Come, the meal is prepared. The Lord desires for you to recline at table with Him. He desires to give you His body and blood, which He shed for you, for the forgiveness of your sins. He accepts you as a part of His family, no matter your past. May we all look forward to the day when he eats this meal anew with us in his heavenly kingdom forever.

Come and taste. See that the Lord is Good and His mercy endures forever.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Adapted from the Lenten series: Christ our Passover by Rev. Dr. David Peter