

The Last Supper

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[0 : 0 0] All right, cool. Thanks, Alex. Good morning. My name is Jesse, as Alex said, one of the pastors here. And if you are listening to this online, glad that you are listening in.

If you're new, I'm so glad that you're here with us today. And we are continuing in this series through the gospel of Mark. If you have a Bible, go ahead and turn to Mark chapter 14, verse 12. If you don't, don't worry about it. We show the scriptures up on the screen as well. And so we're kind of in the final stages. We're at the very end of Mark, getting close to the end of Jesus's life, just before he's about to go to the cross. And last week we looked at a story which involved Jesus and this gal named Mary who anointed Jesus. And for Jesus, that moment was so important that he memorialized it. And he did that by saying that wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her. He wanted his disciples for all generations to know that moment because it pointed to something significant. And on the heels of that comes another moment that Jesus memorializes that he wanted his disciples to both remember and to put into practice continually.

And that is the Lord's Supper, also known as communion or the last supper or the Eucharist. It has so many different names, but that is what we're looking at today. And so I want to say this, if you are new to church or you're here checking out Christianity, I think today's sermon is going to be powerful because it's more than just talking about this is how you do it and this is what it is. It is a clear picture of who Jesus is and what he has done for us. And that's what I hope that you walk away with, but I hope that's what we all walk away with for anybody that follows Jesus. So we're going to jump into Mark chapter 14.

We got a lot of ground to cover. So here we go. On the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover? And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, go into the city and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you, follow him. And wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, the teacher says, where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready there, prepare for us. And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them and they prepared the Passover. And when it was evening, he came with the 12 and as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, truly, which is a way of saying, pay attention to what I am saying. I say to you, one of you will betray me. One who is eating with me. They began to be sorrowful and say, and to say to him one after another, is it I? He said to them, it is one of the 12 when he was dipping bread into the dish with me. For the son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the son of man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born. 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. And he took a cup. And when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank of it. And he said to them, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Here's that word again, truly. 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. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives and Jesus said to them, you will fall away for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Peter said to him, even though they all fall away, I will not.

And Jesus said to him, truly, I tell you this very night before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times. But he said emphatically, if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said the same. This is God's word. So this is the second time in this chapter that the Passover is mentioned as well as the feast of unleavened bread. And Mark, the writer of the gospel, he is making sure that we are clued into that reality, to that fact, which means it's an important piece for

us to really understand this passage and what's going on. See this meal that Jesus had, it's more than Jesus just wanting one final meal with his good friends. You know, Haley and I, we've done that multiple times in our lives as people have moved away or we've moved away from people that were very dear to us. And those final meals, those final moments are really sweet times.

[4 : 56] And they create fond memories and lasting memories. But Jesus is doing a lot more than just creating a memory for us to like look at him and go, well, Jesus, you're such a sentimental softy.

He's doing a lot more than that. He planned this meal. He thought it out way ahead of time. You see that in the very beginning. He tells his disciples all these instructions. He had privately secured a rich man's upper guest room and he had him furnish it to his liking. And you have to remember the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover, that was a big thing for Jews in that day. I mean, that was like part of a pilgrimage everywhere from all over the place came to you for that particular week, week long festival. And so you have to know that Jerusalem, their population just increased by a lot.

And there was probably a lot of planning going on by a lot of people to secure places to eat the Passover together. So Jesus, man, he's on the ball here. He cares about this meal big time. Why? Because he's using it to introduce a ritual for his disciples for all generations to practice. Now we have to stop and think like, man, okay, that's great. But why did Jesus have to do this now?

Why couldn't he have instituted the Lord's Supper at any other moment? He's been with his disciples for three years. Because time and place and context is so important for us to understand fully what the Lord's Supper is about. It had to be introduced on Passover because Jesus was about to become the true and final Passover lamb. And the Passover might've been an important historic moment for every Jew to remember. And it was, it was part of their national identity that they would look back and remember and participate in. But that Passover meal, that Passover remembrance, it served to be a shadow of what Jesus was the true substance. See, you can't fully understand the Lord's Supper without understanding the Passover. And I'm not condemning anyone who takes communion without having done a kind of a PhD thesis on the Passover. That's, that's not what I'm saying. But we have to reckon that the Lord's Supper is based on that old story. And when you know that story, it will blow your mind with wonder and it will flood your heart with thanksgiving for what Jesus has done and all that the

[7 : 26] Lord's Supper represents. But that's what good theology is meant to do. Good theology leads to doxology or it leads to worship. That's what it does. That's what it's meant to stir in our hearts.

So today we're going to get acquainted with the Passover story, which takes us all the way back to the Israelites being slaves in Egypt hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years ago. And they were slaves in Egypt for a long time, several hundred years, in fact. And at the appointed time, God says, that's enough. He remembers his covenant with Abraham. Not that he had forgotten about Israel being in Egypt and their slavery at all. It's just a way of saying, God's about to fulfill his promise.

He's saying, now the appointed time has come for me to act on behalf of my people and do something amazing. So what does God do? He sends Moses to tell Pharaoh, let my people go.

Pharaoh says, no.

And he keeps saying, no. Through nine plagues, right? And after the ninth plague, what do we have left? What do we see? It's Egypt's crops are destroyed. Their livestock's dead. They've endured boils on their body. The Nile's been polluted with blood. They were invaded with swarms of flies and gnats and frogs and locusts. Even the sun was blocked. So the land was covered in deep darkness for days on end.

And, you know, at some point you just like, you see this and, you know, bad thing after bad thing, after bad thing happening. After a while you start to feel sorry for Pharaoh and the Egyptians. You start kind of like, man, hey, maybe he'll change his mind. We're like rooting for Pharaoh to say, hey, let the people go. I mean, who's really that hardheaded? Everybody. Anyways, actually what God was doing is after every single one of those plagues, Pharaoh's like, yeah, I think I'm going to let him go. And then it says, God hardens Pharaoh's heart. After a few of those plagues, especially the later ones, it said he hardened Pharaoh's heart. Why? Because God had an ultimate plan. He was doing something. He isn't just taking Israel out of Egypt. He's establishing something important.

One, he's establishing to Egypt and also to Israel that he is superior to all of Egypt's gods. Every

single one of those plagues was an attack on one of Egypt's gods. And he's also pointing out that they are coming out through God's judgment and deliverance in a very specific way. God has one more plague. We got nine plagues. There's one more. And here it is. He's going to kill the firstborn in every household. That's pretty gnarly. It doesn't get more intense than that, does it? Now, here's where it gets interesting. Up to this point, all the plagues that God visited on the land were in Egypt, were upon Egypt, except in this part of Egypt called Goshen, because that's where the Israelites lived.

[10:12] God was making a clear distinction between Egypt and Israel and all those plagues. And it seems this plague, this 10th one would do that. He warns Moses about this coming plague in Exodus 11, verse 6 and 70. He says, there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. Now you hear that and you think, great, God's going to do the same thing. He's making the distinction between Egypt and Israel. He's just going to target the Egyptians, it seems like, on that. But that's not the same distinction he has in mind. Look what he says in Exodus 12. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, in the land of Egypt, this month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the 10th day of this month, every man shall take a lamb according to their father's houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons, according to that, to what each can eat. You shall make your count for the lamb.

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male, a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the 14th day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall eat it. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And on all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgments. I am the Lord.

The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations, as a statute forever. You shall keep it as a feast. And there was a lot of information.

There was a lot of reading, but notice what has happened. Something changed, particularly in this plague, not just what was going to happen, but just being an Israelite living in Goshen wasn't enough of a distinction suddenly. God was about to visit death on everyone, which is an important part of the story.

[13:00] The Passover story is salvation from death. It is salvation from death, interestingly enough, through death. It's just somebody else's death. See, in this story, there was a substitute, right? A firstborn male lamb unblemished that was sacrificed. Sound familiar? Jesus, God's only begotten son, firstborn among many adopted brothers and sisters. He was unblemished, sinless. He is called many times the lamb of God.

He was killed in our place, our substitute. Now, as we've read, that Passover lamb's blood was very important because Israel was told to take it and paint it on the outside of the house. In this way, the house became marked with the blood of the sacrifice. God says in verse 13 with that, when he sees the blood, he's going to pass over that house, and no plague would befall that house or destroy it. See, that blood, it served as a sign of protection from the destroyer. In verse 23 of the same chapter, God reminds them again, and it says, for the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. God gets a little more particular here.

There's this destroyer. There's this destroyer. And God would stand between the destroyer and the house that's marked in the blood of the Passover lamb. The very presence of God would be interposed between this destroyer of death and the house that was marked in the blood. Which means that house was hidden in God. It was hidden in God from judgment, saved from wrath.

[14 : 55] Now, by faith, the blood that Jesus shed on the cross marks us who believe in that by faith. We are hidden in Christ. And that is our only hope in being rescued from death.

Nothing but the blood of Jesus is what we sing, don't we? Now, that is remarkable, but that's not the whole story. The Israelites had to mark their doorposts with blood, but they had to do something else.

They had to eat a meal that same night, which seems like a very unimportant detail, but it actually isn't. And here's why. Because in eating, what happened is the participant in his eating is being united symbolically to the sacrifice.

See, the Passover story shows how we are united to the sacrificial lamb. Now, without getting too gross, the same lamb that rescued you from death was the lamb you had to eat in your house.

That's what's being told to the Israelites in Exodus 12. Now, you know, that's pretty crazy. It can kind of come across as like, hey, you already like killed the lamb.

[16 : 05] Do you really need to like insult it any further? It makes me kind of think of like Wile E. Coyote, those old cartoons where he like falls off the cliff and like hits. And then, you know, gets up just in time for the big boulder to then smash him again, you know.

It seems like they treated the lamb like that. You killed him. Now you got to eat him. What's next? Are you going to burn the rest of him that's left over? Well, actually, that was the thing too, you know. But eating the sacrificial lamb wasn't adding insult to injury.

The purpose of this was to unite that substitutionary sacrifice to the person it was saving. Now, this sounds crazy to our modern ears because that's not how we see anything working in this world.

The closest thing that we can have of just like feeling like, hey, I am united to something is through physical intimacy. The Bible actually says there is a oneness that happens in that act.

And although you may remain as two individuals, there is a connection that is made that joins the two. Now, I'll admit being united through a meal and eating is a hard thing to understand and believe.

[17 : 13] But just because something's hard to explain doesn't make it untrue. Gravity can be fully explained. Scientists know how it works, but they still don't know why it works.

And yet, nevertheless, gravity is true. Some of the truest truths are actually cloaked in mystery. All that to say is we may not fully understand why that is, but that is how God designed salvation to work.

The one being saved must be united to their substitute. And in this way, vicarious atonement is complete. Nothing is lacking. Now, before you think, Jesse, you have lost it, consider what Jesus said.

John 6, verse 53. So Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. Now, here's what's interesting.

[18 : 22] The lamb wasn't the only thing that was to be eaten at the Passover meal. They also ate this thing called unleavened bread. Now, it's important that we draw our attention to this because the Passover was celebrated at the very beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It says in Exodus 12, 15, on the first day, you shall remove leaven out of your houses. Okay? Kind of a weird rule, right? What's that all about?

So before the Passover meal was eaten, all the leaven had to be cleaned out of the house. It says in another place about this same ritual that no leaven shall be found in all of the land. Which is like, that's another level of OCD, right?

All you clean freaks are like rejoicing. You're just like, yes! Clean it out. God's speaking your love language. So what is this all about? What is this leaven purging thing?

Well, it tells us about the Passover story. It's about repenting of sin. You have to read that back into the Old Testament mandate to cleanse the house of leaven.

[19 : 25] That's what's going on. It symbolizes the purging of sin. But we can't do that. We can't purge ourselves of our sin. What we can do is we can confess it. We can name it.

And we can repent of it. And when we do that, we are promised that God will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Now, as sinners, even as Christians, we are sanctified, but we are still sinners.

We have sin there. As sinners, we're like this lump of dough, leavened with sin. And some, you know, every birthday that goes by, I feel a lot more of that lumpiness. But this leaven, this sin is everywhere.

But you know what? We can go to Jesus with our sin and repent of them. And don't say you don't have any because God's word says that if we say we have no sin, then we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But when we repent, what does God do? He removes the leaven from our house. That's the good news. But there's another side to this purging of the leaven.

[20 : 34] And that's feasting on Jesus who took the unleavened bread in the last supper and he broke it and he gave it to his disciples and he said to them, take, this is my body. And when we partake of his body, that unleavened bread, his sinless perfection, we are united to him.

Him who is sinless. The old school theological term is called imputed righteousness. And before you go, huh? Let me explain it. I'm going to get into it right now.

Romans 4.22 says this. That is why his faith was counted or another translation, many other translations prefer the word credited.

That is why his faith was credited to him as righteousness. But the words, it was credited to him, were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be credited to us who believe in him who raised from the dead, Jesus our Lord, who is delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

So, to be credited means someone is giving you something you don't have and that you haven't earned. Now, in God's economy, he isn't dealing with dollars, he's dealing with righteousness.

[21 : 51] It's like someone putting your name on their resume, like a really, really great resume that you would be jealous of and would want for yourself. You didn't do all the things that person did to be so absolutely amazing and perfect, but they're glad to write your name on their resume and said, yeah, that's for him and her too.

And that's what Jesus has done for us. He has us a resume. It's not our resume. It's his resume. And he's credited it to us. Here's a little extra something interesting about that unleavened bread. Deuteronomy 16.3 calls it the bread of affliction, which is really bad marketing. If you're trying to get people to like, think like, oh, I think I'm going to enjoy this.

But if it's meant to taste bread bad, which it was, it makes sense. It was actually flavored with bitter herbs. So why is it called the bread of affliction?

Well, as a reminder that as they ate it, that God brought them out of the land of their affliction. It's true for them. It's true for us. God brought us out of the land of our affliction.

[23 : 06] He brought us out from Egypt, from slavery to sin and death. But he didn't set us free so that we can just go live life on our own terms. He brings us out of bondage, yes, but he brings us into a relationship with him.

One of the things that was said that the message that Moses went and told Pharaoh was, let my people go so that they can worship me.

Okay? There's two parts to that. There's freedom and there's a calling. And this calling into something, this calling into this new and special relationship, it's what Jesus gets at when he gives them the cup to drink and says to them, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

So when God brought Israel out of Egypt, he immediately took them to Sinai and made a covenant with them. And at Sinai, the covenant is sealed in sacrificial blood.

There's a lot of blood happening at the Sinai covenant where God, you know, gives Moses the law. I mean, all the Israelites are sprinkled in blood. All the artifacts of the covenant that support the covenant, that uphold the covenant, they're also sprinkled in blood.

[24 : 18] Everything's covered in blood. Now, despite it being Passover, when Jesus says this thing about this is the blood of my covenant, Jesus has Sinai in mind. Jesus is saying something major is about to happen.

Something major is shifting in the redemptive plan and purposes of God. Pay attention to it. God is establishing a new covenant that is superior to the old one.

Now, if you're hearing this word covenant and you're like, what in the world does that mean? Well, it's simply a word used in the Bible to explain how relationships worked in the ancient world because they were built on promises.

Two parties would come together and they would make vows and oaths and promises, right? And that relationship was built on both covenant blessings and covenant curses.

So if you kept the covenant, there was blessings in it. If you broke the covenant, there was curses involved in it. And then they would seal it with a meal and the sacrifice of an animal.

[25 : 20] Why? Because the sacrifice of the animal symbolized the penalty for breaking that covenant. Covenants were permanent commitments. Till death do us part kind of stuff.

But that shows us something beautiful about this Passover story and this new covenant that Jesus is embarking upon. The Passover story is about a faithful God who is committed to us no matter what.

This is why the gospel sounds too good to be true. Jesus is here eating with his friends and establishing this new covenant. He is committing to them.

He gives them himself in the symbols and signs of his body and blood. He is saying, I am all in. And then he goes to prove that as he goes to the cross. He is going to be their sacrificial lamb that delivers them from sin and death.

Now, if you and I were Jesus and we're making that kind of level in commitment, who are the kind of people we would do that with? We'd be very choosy, wouldn't we?

[26 : 26] We'd look for the people that would most likely like uphold that commitment. Probably like they look like the most faithful. They got a really good track record, all that stuff, right? Jesus doesn't do that.

He makes that covenant knowing that one of them has already betrayed him. And one guy is going to deny him, even though he says he's not.

And the rest of them are going to fall away and abandon him in the next 24 hours. That's who Jesus starts this covenant with. And that's the scandal of the gospel.

Jesus covenants with us fully knowing how fickle we can be. Yeah, we want to be merry, like in that previous story, pouring out our devotion on Jesus.

But how often do we fail at that? Is your faith weak? Do you fall into sin? Do you feel like a lump of leaven sometimes rather than a devoted disciple?

[27 : 29] Do you find yourself ashamed at times to be associated as a follower of Jesus? At any given time, we are any of those things.

Yet, Jesus has already sealed us securely in his covenant by his own blood. Like those doorposts at Passover, we are saved from death.

We are cleansed from sin. We are united to our Passover lamb. And Jesus' commitment will never, ever fail. What an amazing savior and Passover lamb we have.

And as the band comes up and we respond today, we are going to be taking communion in a moment. And I trust that by now, we are going to come with a lot of faith to the Lord's Supper.

However, we've seen it in such beautiful, profound ways. But before you participate in this meal of union with Jesus, you have to believe that Jesus is the Passover lamb who died for you.

[28 : 33] You know, every Israelite in that first Passover had to live by faith that what God said he was going to do, he would do. And so by faith, they slaughtered the Passover lamb.

By faith, they took its blood and they put it on the doorposts and the lentils. By faith, they ate it. And that same faith is required of you and me, everybody in this room.

See, it is by faith that we are united to our Passover lamb. It's not just in the simple eating. And so if you're not yet a follower of Jesus, don't come to the meal.

You got to come to the one the meal points to in faith. That is your first step. And that is your invitation. Come to the Passover lamb who died in your place to save you from death, to cleanse you from sin, whose salvation calls you out of slavery and into his kingdom.

And in a moment, there'll be a prayer for you to pray, to respond and pray that and know that you will be saved and you will be his. Now, if you're here and you're already a follower of Jesus, before we take communion, we are called to examine our hearts.

[29 : 48] The equivalent of getting the leaven out of the house. Before we take the Passover lamb, we examine. Where are there things that we need to repent of before we come to him?

And you know what? Do it because God's grace invites us to come. We don't come to a throne of judgment. He says, come to me in your time of need. We have this great high priest who is there, who loves you.

He says, come to me and confess and repent. And you know what? You will find healing and forgiveness and cleansing. Come to him before you come to the table. Come to him before you come to the table. Thank you.