

Luke 22:7-20 The day of Unleavened Bread arrived, when it was necessary to sacrifice the Passover lamb. ⁸Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it.” ⁹They said to him, “Where do you want us to prepare it?” ¹⁰He told them, “Just as you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters. ¹¹Tell the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” ¹²He will show you a large, furnished upper room. Make preparations there.” ¹³They went and found things just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁴When the hour had come, Jesus reclined at the table with the twelve apostles. ¹⁵He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, ¹⁶for I tell you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷He took a cup, gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves, ¹⁸for I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹He took 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.” ²⁰In the same way, he took the cup after the supper, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is being poured out for you.”

A couple in my former congregation in Wisconsin used to love to go to flea markets, antique shops, and that sort of thing. They knew what was valuable and what wasn't so they could get some good deals. I remember driving around with them, looking for a new desk for my office at church that was still under construction. It was a very nice piece of furniture that didn't set us back that much money either.

In one of their shopping adventures they came across this little book. He thought I might be interested. He was correct. This is the Passover Haggadah. You might call it the liturgy for the Passover celebration. Some of the elements of it go back to the time of Christ and even before it. The neat thing about this one is that it is specifically designed for people who aren't that familiar with Hebrew. It has the Hebrew text but then the English translation right under it.

In a way it is sad that this little book exists. Because people are still celebrating the Passover it means that they are still waiting for the Messiah to come. The message of the New Testament is that God has sent the Messiah that he promised in our Savior Jesus. We see that particularly clearly in this text. Jesus is the Passover. He fulfills it and he replaces it.

One quick note: traditionally we refer to this day as Maundy Thursday. In the new hymnal it suggests using Holy Thursday instead since so few people know what Maundy means. It isn't a poor pronunciation of Monday. It comes from that Latin word “mandatum” which means “command.” It refers to Jesus' words spoken on that day, “**A new commandment I give you: Love one another.**” On this day and the next, Jesus shows what love really means.

Last Sunday we read these words. Remember what happened at the beginning of this chapter. Satan tempted one of the twelve apostles, Judas Iscariot, to betray Jesus to his enemies. Judas was the one to take care of the money for the disciples. Apparently he used to help himself to some of it. Money became more important to him than his Savior. So he was willing to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

That fact probably helps explain why Jesus tells Peter and John where to prepare the Passover meal. They were supposed to go into Jerusalem and follow a man who was carrying a water jar. He will lead them to a house where a man that he does not name will have an upper room prepared for them. That's the place where they should get ready for the Passover. Jesus and the other ten apostles would meet them later.

This tells us a couple of things. It reveals Jesus' power as true God. He knew when that man would be carrying water back and exactly where he would go. This is just further proof that he is in charge of everything that is going on. I often wondered how a man carrying a water jug would be noticeable. Well, at that time gathering water would have been a woman's job, so seeing a man doing it would stick out. That's not intended to be sexist in any way. That's just one of the jobs women would typically do.

It also shows us that Jesus was well aware of Judas' plot to betray him. What better time to arrest him than when they would be alone by themselves and everybody else would be indoors celebrating too? By keeping the exact location secret, Judas could not set a trap for them. They would be able to eat that Passover in peace. Jesus would have an opportunity to teach them all the things we read about in John 13-17.

Jesus said, “**I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.**” Remember in his Sermon on the Mount Jesus had said, “**Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy them but to fulfill them.**” Throughout his life and ministry he lived in perfect obedience to the Old Testament law. He is the only one who could. He did that for us as our Substitute.

On Maundy Thursday he was fulfilling the Passover. The apostles had no clue that this was the last time that the Passover was going to need to be celebrated. It had been pointing ahead to him. The sacrifice of a lamb pointed to him as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Just like that sacrificial lamb's blood spared the firstborn males on that first Passover, Jesus' blood would spare all of humanity from sin, death, and Hell.

I'm sure that another reason why he was so eager to eat this Passover is because he wanted to be with his closest friends. When something terrible has happened, having our loved ones around makes us feel better even if they really can't do anything about it. This is just another example of how Jesus is a true human being, just like us except that he had no sin. That's why he would take Peter, James, and John with him when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Luke tells us, "¹⁷**He took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves, ¹⁸for I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."**" Sometimes people get confused by that because it seems like Jesus is instituting part of Holy Communion twice. That's where knowing that Passover Haggadah gives us some insight.

One of the first things that would happen is that the head of the house would take the cup of wine, say a prayer of thanks, and then pass that cup around. Depending on which one you read, that would happen four or five times over the course of the Passover celebration. Luke is including this detail because he is writing to a Gentile named Theophilus who wouldn't have been familiar with Jewish customs.

It's interesting that Jesus says about the Passover meal, "**I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**" We just heard him say about the cup of wine, "**I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.**" Does that mean that there will be wine in heaven? Maybe. I think too often we look at heaven as if it is just the best of what we experience here. That's selling it short.

Heaven will be beyond anything we can imagine. It is often compared to a wedding banquet in the Bible because that's one of the happiest times we experience in this life, but even that falls far short. The whole point of the Passover was to show how Jesus would rescue us from death. When we're all in heaven after the Last Day, that will be perfectly fulfilled. We will have nothing but perfect peace, joy, and harmony with our God and his people forever. That's what Jesus was looking forward to.

Jesus is the Passover. He fulfills it and he replaces it.

So once the Passover meal is over Jesus takes two of the elements from that meal—the unleavened bread and the cup of wine—and uses them to institute something completely new. Luke tells us, "¹⁹**He took 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."**"

After that Luke says, "²⁰**In the same way, he took the cup after the supper, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is being poured out for you."**" Since he includes "**after the supper**" with the cup, some people have thought that there was a big gap in time between Jesus giving the bread and the wine when Holy Communion was first instituted.

Luke had good reason to include "**after the supper**" to the passing of the cup. That would emphasize that this was not one of the four or five passings of the cup for the Passover celebration. This was something entirely new. Now let's look at those two final verses of this text more closely. They are very precious words that should give every believer comfort throughout this life.

Jesus words are clear, "**This is my body... This cup is the new testament in my blood.**" So whenever we receive the bread in Holy Communion we are also receiving Christ's true body, the same body that was nailed to the cross for us. Whenever we receive the wine in Holy Communion we are also receiving Christ's true blood, the same blood that was shed on the cross for us.

The problem that people have with those words is not that Jesus is unclear. His words are very simple and very direct. The problem is that they are impossible to understand. I do not understand how it is true, but it's not up to my tiny little mind to figure it out. Jesus had just given us a beautiful example of how he knows everything and can do anything. So if Jesus says that that's the truth, then in faith I take him at his Word and leave all the details up to him.

Jesus also tells us, "**Do this in remembrance of me.**" This is more than just remembering the historical fact that Jesus existed. Remember everything he has done for you on Holy Week. When we come up to Holy Communion we remember that Jesus loved us enough to allow himself to be nailed to a cross for us. He loved us enough to pour out his blood so all of our sins could be washed away forever.

I never want us to get into a spiritual rut where we come up for Communion because, well, we've gotten to that point in the service so we might as well do it. I want us to be thinking. I want us to do the right thing for the right reasons. When you get in line to come up here, remember the incredible privilege that your Savior is giving to you. He wants to use Communion to make you absolutely sure that you are forgiven.

Technically speaking, Jesus didn't have to institute the sacraments. If all he did is tell us in his Word that we are forgiven and we are God's children, that would have been more than enough. But the God who loves you so much isn't content to stop there. He gives us our forgiveness in a way that we can see, we can taste, we can experience. He makes himself a part of us both physically and spiritually.

There are some words in Jesus' words of institution that are very small. It would be easy to overlook them. But they are very powerful despite their size. Twice he says a simple prepositional phrase, "**for you.**" The Greek shows that the "you" there is plural. Think of southern American English. Y'all is singular but all y'all is plural. Well, this is all ya'll. Jesus didn't just do this for the eleven remaining apostles but for every believer.

So when you hear the words of institution imagine that your Savior was looking directly into your eyes both times he says "**for you.**" This is more than just saying that it belongs to us but that Jesus died with you in mind. He wants you specifically to have that comfort. He wants you to be certain that all of your sins have been taken away too. Now we can be ready for a life of faithful service to him.

You may have noticed in verse 20 that the translation in the EHV is slightly different from the NIV which we used to use. The EHV says, "**This cup is the new testament in my blood.**" The NIV says, "**This cup is the new covenant in my blood.**" So who is right? The answer is, of course, yes. Both testament and covenant are legitimate translations of the underlying Greek word.

The word "covenant" is a nice translation because it ties to the old covenant that God had made with Israel. The word "testament" is a nice translation too. Think of a last will and testament. Jesus knew he would be dying the next day. Not long after that he would ascend into heaven. This is what his eternal will is for all human beings. He gave his life to save souls from death. That was true then. It's true today. It will be true as long as this world goes on.

So if we ever wonder if we've out-sinned God's forgiveness, Holy Communion is there to say, "No. No, you haven't." In my favorite Communion hymn we sing at the end of every verse, "Lord, may your body and your blood be for my soul the highest good." That's exactly what it is and exactly what it will always be. It will strengthen us and keep us in the one true faith now and forever.

Jesus is the Passover. He fulfills it and he replaces it. It was my privilege to be able to show how the Passover was a picture of Jesus in our mid-week Lenten services. Today, on Maundy Thursday, we get to see how it came to a close and how Jesus instituted Holy Communion in its place. Both of those things point to Jesus alone. He is the Savior we need. He is the Savior God sent.