



**WESTLAKE HILLS**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## "The Last Supper, The Lord's Supper"

*Sermon Series: "The Way of Jesus"*

*Mark 14:12-31*

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### **Mark 14:12-31 (New International Version)**

### **The Lord's Supper**

<sup>12</sup>On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

<sup>13</sup>So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him.

<sup>14</sup>Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' <sup>15</sup>He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

<sup>16</sup>The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

<sup>17</sup>When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup>While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

<sup>19</sup>They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"

<sup>20</sup>"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup>The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

<sup>22</sup>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

<sup>23</sup>Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

<sup>24</sup>"This is my blood of the <sup>[a]</sup> covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. <sup>25</sup>"I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

<sup>26</sup>When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

### **Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial**

<sup>27</sup>"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered."<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>28</sup>But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

<sup>29</sup>Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

<sup>30</sup>"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice<sup>[c]</sup> you yourself will disown me three times."

<sup>31</sup>But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

### **Footnotes:**

- a. [Mark 14:24](#) Some manuscripts the new
- b. [Mark 14:27](#) Zech. 13:7
- c. [Mark 14:30](#) Some early manuscripts do not have twice.

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### **Introduction.**

Today marks the 234<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence which was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1776. It was a statement that declared the 13 colonies, which were at war with the Great Britain, were now independent states and no longer a part of the British Empire. It is generally regarded that this date marks the birth of America, so all over this country there will be celebrations and parties and fireworks to commemorate this historic event.

Last year Lorie and I celebrated our first Fourth of July here in Austin. We took in the little parade in the Lost Creek neighborhood where we live, and we went to the Country Club by the low water bridge and took part in the festivities and listened to the music. We finished off the day by going downtown to the Long Center where we listened to the symphony



on the lawn and watched the fireworks explode over Lake Austin. I especially liked hearing the cannons fire during the *1812 Overture*. It was a pretty hot summer night, but we still had a lot of fun.

The Fourth of July is a big day for the Barnes family for another reason. It was 2 years ago tonight that Lorie and I hosted the rehearsal dinner for our son and daughter-in-law's wedding. Holly LOVES fireworks, so it was especially fun to finish off the evening of festivities by taking the whole wedding party to a see the pyrotechnics of a fireworks display in Boulder where we lived at the time.

The Fourth of July is one of the biggest celebrations in this country. It's a time to celebrate our heritage as Americans and to remember what so many have sacrificed to win our freedom and ensure our way of life.

This morning we read of one of the biggest celebrations in the history of the Jewish people. There were many festivals the Hebrews observed over the course of the year, but none was more important or held as much national significance as did the feast of Passover. In some ways you could say it was like their Fourth of July.

### **I. The Celebration of the Passover Meal.**

The Last Supper of Jesus and His disciples was celebrated in the context of the Jewish Passover which commemorated one of the most significant events in Israel's history. It was one of the great feasts of the Jewish nation at the time of Jesus. It still is today. It commemorates the occasion when God delivered the people of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh and their slavery in Egypt.

In sending the last plague upon the land, God had the angel of death "pass over" the houses of the people of Israel which were marked with the blood of a lamb that had been sacrificed for their deliverance, but He struck down every first-born of all the Egyptians. It was this tenth and deadly plague that finally persuaded Pharaoh to let God's people go.

At the time of Jesus in the first century AD, every Jewish male living within 20 miles of Jerusalem was required to celebrate the Passover in the holy city. However, it was the goal of every Jew to travel to Jerusalem at least once in one's lifetime to celebrate Passover there. However, Jesus came to Jerusalem this time not just as a pilgrim. He also came with a mission, and this final meal would set the stage for all that was to follow.

One thing that strikes me about the passage is the way Jesus had a plan, and He made preparations in advance for His disciples to celebrate the feast. Notice how Christ gave instructions to His disciples to go into the city and follow a man carrying a jar of water. It seems a rather odd sign to us until you realize it was not customary in Jesus' day for men to carry water jars, and typically this was considered a woman's work. The man with the jar of water would stand out in a crowd. The disciples were to follow the man to the house he entered, and they were to request help from the owner to make preparations for the meal.

Why the secret signs and all the intrigue? Remember, the Jewish authorities were plotting to arrest Jesus, and Judas had already agreed to hand Him over. The plot thickens in the drama of salvation, and a price has been put on Jesus' head. It was not safe for our Lord to wander about, and He had to do things in secret to prevent getting arrested until His time had fully come.

When all the preparations had been made, Jesus and His disciples followed the proscribed order of the celebration for the Passover meal, but along the way He injected new meaning to the meal at two particular points. In doing this He reinterpreted the sacred feast, and it became a meal that is filled with symbolism for all of us who now follow Christ today.

The Passover celebration always followed the same pattern. It began with the ceremonial search for leaven and included a sacrifice of a lamb which was cooked and prepared in a certain way. The meal consisted of 15 different steps which included the washing of one's hands, drinking various cups of wine, and eating bitter herbs to remember the bitterness of slavery. There was the breaking of bread, the telling the story of deliverance, and the singing of psalms.

Each part of the meal was symbolic, and everything was done for a purpose. Passover was intended to remind the Jews of the hardship of their former slavery in Egypt, and it sought to motivate them to deeper gratitude for the miraculous deliverance God accomplished on their behalf when He took them out of Egypt and led them to the Promised Land.

### **II. Jesus' Reinterpretation of the Sacred Meal.**

In His celebration of the Passover meal, Jesus reinterpreted its meaning. It was this reinterpretation that established the Christian sacrament of the Lord's Supper which you and I continue to celebrate to this day.

Leonardo da Vinci painted his famous rendering of the scene in this passage. In it he depicted the various personalities as he thought they might have looked and the expressions on their faces as he imagined them. da Vinci's painting has stirred quite a bit of discussion in recent years on the heels of the popularity of Dan Brown's novel *The da Vinci Code*.



However, neither Brown's book nor da Vinci's painting is accurate to the events of history. Let's look for a moment at how Jesus reinterpreted the meal.

*The Broken Body.* At the fourth step in the meal, three circles of unleavened bread lay on the table. The middle one was taken and broken. Only a little was eaten to remind the Jews of the affliction they ate in Egypt. Only a little was eaten to remind them that as slaves they never had a whole loaf of bread to eat. It was probably here Jesus took the unleavened bread and He broke it and said, *"This is My body broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*

*The Shed Blood.* At the thirteenth step of the meal, the Cup of Thanksgiving (the 3rd cup of wine toward the end of the meal) was drunk after a brief prayer. The prayer contained a petition for the coming of Elijah to herald the arrival of the Messiah. It was probably here Jesus told His disciples that this cup was the cup of the new covenant which was poured out for many for the remission of their sins. The wine represented His blood that would be shed on the cross of Calvary. The old covenant, the old contract, would be replaced with a new one. It would be a covenant of grace that was made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus' atoning death.

The apostle John announced at the beginning of Jesus' ministry that our Lord was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29). He was the ultimate Passover Lamb who was sacrificed once and for all for the sins of the people. Jesus' broken body and shed blood were the sacrifice that atoned for all our mistakes and the many ways you and I have rebelled against the love of God. He was the scapegoat who was taken out of the camp to bear the punishment we deserve. As the prophet Isaiah writes, *"He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was laid on Him, and by His wounds we are healed"* (Is. 53.5).

The anthem the choir sang this morning at the 11 o'clock service says it well:

Take and eat for this is My body broken for you.  
Drink of Me for here is My blood,  
The covenant blood I pour out for you.  
This is My blessing, this is My comfort.  
This is My forgiveness for you.<sup>i</sup>

Jesus reinterpreted the Passover meal and established the Lord's Supper for all Christians for all time.

### **III. What Does This Mean for You and Me?**

I want you to notice love's last appeal in this passage. Jesus knew what was going to happen. He could see what was in the heart of Judas, and He offered one last warning to him. Jesus spoke of the person who would betray Him, and He warned of the consequences.

Here we see the dilemma we all face. God's love is extended to us, His truth warns us about the danger of sin, but there is no requirement for obedience. God has given us wills free will, and it is the responsibility of each and every person to either accept the love and grace of God as well as His warning, or to reject it. We can receive His invitation, or we can refuse His love and disregard His appeal. It's up to us. In the end, we are responsible for our own choices, even in the midst of the Lord's Supper.

Notice also in this passage the overconfidence of Peter. *"Even if everyone else betrays you, I never will!"* Jesus knew what was going to happen, and He predicted that before the rooster crowed twice Peter would disavow even knowing the Lord three times. And he did. I keep this painting on the screens as a reminder of how fragile our faith can be at times, how prone I am to disown knowing Jesus, just like my namesake did. One minute I'm boasting about the Lord; the next minute I act like I've never known Him.

However, there is a contrast of these two men –Judas and Peter. Both assumed leadership within the group of Jesus' disciples. Both saw and heard the wonderful things He did. Both went through the same cycle of hope, fear, and disillusionment. And in the end, both denied their Master.

There, however, the similarity ends. Judas was remorseful but apparently unrepentant. He took his own life and went down as the greatest traitor in human history. He died unwilling to receive the forgiveness Jesus had to offer him. In contrast, Peter was humiliated but still open to Jesus' message of grace and forgiveness. Later, he was restored by Christ, and he went on to lead a revival in Jerusalem and did not stop until he reached Rome.

The contrast of these two people lies in what they did after their failure, and that is the key for you and me. All of us will fail. All of us will disown the Lord at one time or another. The question is what will we do after the failure, and that makes all the difference. Returning to this sacramental meal of the Lord's Supper is where you and I can find grace and forgiveness and the strength to carry on. It can be our restoration, too, as it was for Peter.



Whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper, pastors the world over remind us how Jesus said, "*Do this in remembrance of Me.*" Our recollection of the events of the night on which Jesus was betrayed takes us deep into the mysteries of forgiveness and grace, and the meal reminds us that we belong to the family of God and we are never alone. This table reminds us that eventually one day all will be well, and it is a foretaste of the celebration all Christians will enjoy one day in heaven – the Wedding Feast of the Lamb who was slain.

Tim Keller tells of a scene from J.R.R. Tolkien's book *The Lord of the Rings* to convey the immense meaning of the Lord's table. Enemies and weapons pummel the walls of the city of Gondor. As the city gates begin to give way, death and the bitterness of defeat begin to take hold, and the evil dark lord grimly claims the city for himself. But in that moment of bleak despair the Riders of Rohan come charging in with their horns blowing loudly. Tolkien writes in *the Return of the King*:

"Pippin rose to his feet,...and he stood listening to the horns, and it seemed to him that they would break his heart with joy. And never in after years could he hear a horn blown in the distance without tears starting in his eyes."

The memory was that great. Adele Calhoun suggests that the Lord's Supper reminds us that when the dark lord looms before us boasting "all is lost," the Lord of light stepped forth and said, "*This is My body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.*" When you and I eat this meal, we taste what redemption cost the Son of God to rescue us from death. For some it is hard to see the bread and the cup without tears welling up in their eyes.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Conclusion.**

Today all over this country people will celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence. There will be feasting and fireworks and fun. But every time you and I gather around the Table of our Lord we celebrate our Declaration of our Dependence. For without the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, you and I would be lost in our sin and destined for an eternity apart from God. It is our dependence on the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which gives us the assurance of heaven, and it is that same dependence which will see us through whatever trial we must face today.

The next time you celebrate communion, remember it's your Declaration of Dependence on a Savior, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Thanks be to God! Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> "The Meal," by R. Nagy.

<sup>ii</sup> Taken from *Spiritual Disciples Handbook* by Adele Calhoun, p 34.

