

Last Meal with the Master

Mark 14:22-31

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We all like a good meal, don't we? I recently read what was served at some of history's most memorable events.

- At President Abraham Lincoln's second Inaugural Ball in 1865, dinner was served at midnight on a 250-foot buffet table. Menu items included beef tongue in gelatin and calf's foot jelly.
- With the SpaceX rocket launch to outer space with a Tesla aboard this week, I was reminded that the first meal on the moon in 1969 included bacon squares, sugar cookies and coffee (that's got all the food groups).

If you could have one last meal before you died, what would you eat?

- Cleopatra downed a handful of figs before she went down.
- Before breathing his last, Napoleon Bonaparte ate liver and bacon chops, sautéed kidneys, garlic toast and roasted tomatoes.
- James Dean ate a slice of apple pie with a glass of milk right before he died.
- Elvis Presley gobbled up four scoops of ice cream and six chocolate chip cookies before suffering a fatal heart attack.
- Walter LaGrand, before being executed in 1999, ate six fried eggs, 16 strips of bacon (do you see a bacon theme here?), one large serving of hash browns, a pint of pineapple sherbet, a breakfast steak, a cup of ice, 7-Up, Dr. Pepper, Coke, hot sauce, coffee, two sugar packs, and four Roloids.

And on the night before He was crucified, Jesus gathered with his closest followers to eat His last meal. This supper was rich in spiritual meaning with sweet symbolism that goes back to the first Passover. This annual meal commemorated the defining moment in Israel's history and was celebrated the same way, every time, every year.

Jesus was set on celebrating this supper and was eager to explain the meaning behind his final meal. Luke 22:15: "***And he said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'***" That phrase "***earnestly desired***" literally means, "*I have desired with desire.*"

At its heart, the Passover supper was designed to celebrate the temporary deliverance that came through the blood of a spotless lamb. Jesus now initiates a new meal that celebrates the timeless deliverance that comes through the blood of the sinless Lamb of God.

Each element of the Passover meal had symbolic significance. BTW, if you're following the Edgewood Bible Reading Plan for February, you'll read about the Passover in Exodus 12 on Sunday! The unleavened bread represented the haste with which Israel left Egypt. Bitter herbs reminded them of the pain of their slavery. A paste-like puree was prepared to look like clay to recall their forced labor. The Passover lamb helped them remember God's merciful "passing-over" and the wine symbolized the blood sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts.

It's likely Jesus would have held up four different cups during this meal, each representing one of the "***I will***" phrases from Exodus 6:6-7.

1. **Cup of Rescue:** "***I will bring you out from under.***"
2. **Cup of Release:** "***I will deliver you from slavery.***" As a way to recall the ten plagues, ten drops of wine were poured on a plate during the meal.
3. **Cup of Redemption:** "***I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.***"
4. **Cup of Renewal:** "***I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God.***"

The Lord has always been zealous to rescue, release, redeem and renew!

The supper began with Jesus as the "heavenly host" pronouncing a benediction over the first cup. Then a table was brought in with the roasted lamb. Immediately after this, all the dishes were removed and the second cup of wine would be filled. At this point it was customary for a son to ask his father a question: "*How is this night distinguished from all other nights?*"

In response, taking on the role of the father, Jesus would have recited the history of Israel. The dishes were then put back on the table and Jesus would have taken the symbols in succession, starting with the Passover lamb, then the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread as He briefly explained the importance of each one.

Everything was going according to the Passover plan. The disciples knew the drill, and could recite every word. And then in Mark 14:22, everything changes: "***And***

as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it [hold up and break the matzo bread] and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.'"

Jesus, as the Bread of Life was born in Bethlehem, the house of Bread and now He holds up the bread and "**bles**ses" it. We get the word "*eulogy*" from the original, which means, "*to speak well of.*" Jesus likely gave this common blessing over the bread: "*Blessed are you, Lord, our God, who brings forth bread from the earth.*"

What Jesus says next no doubt stunned them: "**Take; this is my body.**" What was that? This wasn't in the script for the supper, or was it? With these five words Jesus broke from a tradition that had lasted for centuries.

I was at a McDonald's on Wednesday typing this section of the sermon when a guy came up to me and asked if I was working hard. I told him I was (I'm not sure he believed me). He asked me what I do. I said I was a pastor and then he made the sign of the cross [demonstrate]. I asked him if he was Catholic and he said yes. He asked if I was a Catholic priest and I told him no (I wonder if he saw my wedding ring). He came closer and I told him I was working on my sermon. He made the sign of the cross again so I asked him where he goes to mass. He said his church closed down so I invited him to Edgewood. He told me he was too old to go to church. I said you're never too old. He made the sign of the cross again, started backing up and told me he needed to go home and sleep. My eyes filled with tears as He walked away.

Jesus **took** humanity upon Himself, was **broken** on the cross as our substitute when He **gave** Himself for us...and instead of **taking** Him into His life, all this guy could do was make the sign of the cross and go home and sleep. Hopefully I'll see him again.

Before they could fully recover from this shocking statement, we read in Mark 14:23: "**And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it.**" Jesus blesses the bread and then gives thanks for the cup. This is the Greek word, "*eucharisteo*," from where we get Eucharist. This is likely the third cup, commonly called the "cup of redemption" or the "cup of thanksgiving."

Notice that, "**they all drank of it.**" Judas was already gone but the other eleven all drank from the cup as it was passed around. I think of what Jesus said to James and John in Mark 10:39 when they were jockeying for the top spot in the kingdom:

“The cup that I drink you will drink.” The word ***“cup”*** was a symbol of God’s judgment and joy, of wrath and redemption.

The script for the supper is back on track and then in verse 24, Jesus startles them again when He says, ***“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”*** The wine in the cup was produced through violence as the grapes were crushed to extract their juice. The cup represents His violent and bloody death, which would inaugurate the new covenant, spoken of in Jeremiah 31:31: ***“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.”***

Biblical covenants were always ratified by blood. At its core, the word ***“covenant”*** means, ***“to cut.”*** Blood inaugurated the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai when we read that Moses threw blood on the altar and then splashed it on the people in Exodus 24:6-8. Hebrews 9:22 establishes the importance of blood sacrifice: ***“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”*** 1 Peter 1:19 declares that we are ransomed: ***“with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”***

The Old Testament was filled with rules, regulations and religious rituals and now God relates to us through relationship. Don’t miss this. The angel of death only “passed-over” those homes where the blood of the lambs had been applied. Likewise, unless you have applied the blood of the Lamb to your life, you will die in your sins.

Recognizing that there is a lot of disagreement related to the Lord’s Supper among different denominations let me reiterate two points I made a couple years ago.

1. **The bread and the cup serve as memorials of the Lord’s death; they don’t mystically become the body and blood of Jesus.** None of the disciples would have thought that somehow the bread and the wine were turned into the body and blood of Jesus. After all, He was still in the room with them and He was holding the bread and the wine in His hands [demonstrate]! When they saw Jesus hold these elements they would have immediately recognized them as tangible representations of a far deeper reality because the Passover meal was filled with word pictures explained by the host of the meal. In addition, many prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel used sermon props and acted out parables as part of their preaching.

- 2. We are remembering His death, not *repeating* the sacrifice.** Some of you, including me, come from a tradition that teaches that Jesus is sacrificed again and again through the celebration of the Mass. Scripture is very clear that Jesus has completed His sacrificial work on our behalf. Nothing more needs to be done, except to repent and believe that He died as the substitute for your sins. Hebrews 10:10: ***“We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”***

Jesus then looks out into the future and uses the force of an oath in verse 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.”*** At this point, He’s likely looking at the fourth cup of consummation but doesn’t drink it. Jesus is giving us the assurance of the coming kingdom of God where believers will be assembled for another meal with the Master in Revelation 19:9: ***“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”***

Jesus not only changes things up at this meal, He also says some things that messes up the disciples. Notice next that he gives two predictions with a promise in the middle.

Predictions

- 1. You will all desert me.** We see this in verse 28: ***“And Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’”*** Judas has left to do his dastardly deed and now Jesus tells the disciples that they will all desert Him. The word for ***“fall away”*** means, ***“to take offense and to fall into sin.”***

Jesus is quoting Zechariah 13:7 but adds the words, ***“I will,”*** referring to God himself. In a real sense, it’s not Judas or the religious leaders or you or me that killed Christ. It was the Father Himself. The word for ***“strike”*** means ***“to put to death”*** and ***“scattered”*** means ***“to be dispersed; separated like chaff.”*** Let’s fast forward to Mark 14:50 to see how this prediction was fulfilled: ***“And they all left him and fled.”***

- 2. Peter will deny me.** In light of the prediction that the disciples will desert Christ, in verse 29, ***“Peter said to him, ‘Even though they all fall away, I will not.’”*** Peter is perturbed because in his pride, he thinks he’s better than the others. They might bail on Jesus but Peter believes He will never fail the Lord. His

response in the Greek is emphatic: *“But not I!”* Because all of us are prone to pride, let’s ponder these passages:

- Proverbs 16:18: *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”*
- Proverbs 28:26: *“Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool.”*
- Proverbs 29:23: *“One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.”*
- 1 Corinthians 10:12: *“Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.”*

Peter thinks he’s the best so Jesus tells him he will do worse than the rest in verse 30: *“And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.’”* They will desert one time but he will deny three times before the sun comes up.

In verse 31, Peter proudly protests this prediction: *“But he said emphatically, ‘If I must die with you, I will not deny you.’ And they all said the same.”* Peter is using the strongest form of denial in Greek. The word *“emphatically”* means *“to be exceedingly vehement, to protest over and above.”* He not only claims that he would sooner die than deny Him, the phrase could be translated like this: *“Yet, will not I!”*

Are you watching the Winter Olympics? I read on Friday that the only undefeated men’s skater on the U.S. Olympic Team fell in the short program. Nathan Chen admitted, *“I got ahead of myself. I think I was a little too excited.”*

Flip over to Mark 14:72 to see how Peter got ahead of himself and was a bit too eager with his promises: *“And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept.”*

A Promise

Jesus predicts that those closest to Him will desert and deny Him. But notice the promise in verse 28 that their falls will not be fatal: *“But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”* This is the fifth prediction of his resurrection in the Gospel of Mark (see 8:31; 9:9; 9:31 and 10:34). I wonder if they could see the grace on His face when He said He would reconnect with them in Galilee going

before them, like a shepherd leading his sheep? It's likely that Ezekiel 34:12 was behind this promise: *"As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness."*

Jesus came for deserters and deniers, for sinners and strugglers, for the proud and pompous, for the reprehensible and rebellious, for liars and for the lost...and for those who bail and for those who fail.

Communion Correctives

As far as we know this memorial meal was celebrated with dignity and decorum in the early church (see Acts 2) until we get to the chaotic and confused church in Corinth. Please turn to 1 Corinthians 11 where we will see four "Communion Correctives." (this outline is from Bob Hostetler, combined with some help from Warren Wiersbe).

1. To Remember – "Look Back" (23-25). Paul received these instructions from Jesus Himself: *"I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you [this is the language of substitution]. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"* Twice in this passage we're told to remember what Jesus did for us.

Because many of us have spiritual amnesia, we need to look back.

2. To Rejoice – "Look Forward" (26). *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* We're to look back and remember the cross and also look forward to the crown. To **"proclaim"** means, *"to announce publicly, to declare, publish, and perpetuate."* The bread and the cup tell the story of redemption and help our faith fast forward to the culmination of history. We eat and drink now in anticipation of a glorious banquet to come.

3. To Repent – "Look Within" (27-28). *"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the*

body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” Once we remember by looking back, and rejoice by looking forward, we can’t help but look inside and see our need to repent. Paul is cautioning us about approaching the Lord’s Table in a trite manner.

4. To Reconcile – “Look Around” (28-29, 33-34). *“Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself...so then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another – if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home – so that when you come together it will not be for judgment.”*

Let’s make sure we’re living in union with those we’re in community with – we could call communion our “*common-union*.” Jesus has made us one, so we need to act accordingly. This is stated clearly in 1 Corinthians 10:17: *“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”*

Shortly after this supper, Jesus poured out His heart to His Father. It’s notable that the number one thing on his mind was unity for His followers as seen in John 17:11: *“Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.”*

I was reminded of my very first day in the office on July 1, 2013 when I gathered the team for a meeting. I had placed a white rope on the conference table and asked everyone to wrap the rope around both of their wrists as I read Ephesians 4:3: *“Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* With this visual demonstration of unity and togetherness I asked someone to fall backwards. When the teammate tried to fall those who were the closest kept him from hitting the floor. I then made the point that we function best when we serve as a team.

Edgewood has always been a united church team. And we must be eager to maintain it because unity can easily unravel in a congregation. We’re all susceptible to a disease called the “*hardening of the categories*” where we think our views are the only right ones.

Edgewood is multigenerational and multi-cultural and multi-political and multi-musical preference, but we are one in Christ! Every believer has the same salvation, the same Spirit, and the same Scriptures. And so, we must guard and maintain this unity. Communion is the great uniter because the ground is level at

the foot of the cross. I will work at maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and I know you will as well. I certainly don't want to have to tie us all up during a weekend service!

We're all part of one body, and no one is better than anyone else. On Wednesday I caught the last 15 minutes of a talk by Anne Graham Lotz. Anne is the daughter of Billy Graham. She was speaking on prayer and told of the time she took ten days to prepare a series of messages. On the first day, she sat down with her notebook and her Bible and nothing came to her. The same thing happened on the second day.

She then recounts reading a pamphlet on how revival is related to repentance. Someone had challenged her to read it three times. She said the first time she read it she felt smug. The second time she felt spiritual. The third time she read it, she broke down in sorrow. That led to seven days of confessing her sins. She said she repented of sins she didn't even know she had – pride, anger, judgmentalism, prayerlessness were just a few. It was after this that she sensed a spiritual surge and was able to prepare the messages for her speaking engagement.

Do you have any sins you need to confess before we take communion? Is there anyone you need to ask forgiveness from? Anyone you need to extend forgiveness to?

In the Bible, dining together signified two things: *appropriation* and *participation*. By eating the bread and drinking from the cup we're saying that we have received redemption and we're declaring that we are in community with one another and with the Lord.

Communion is for sinners in Corinth and sinners in the Quad Cities. As the deacons prepare to serve us, I'm going to offer a prayer from *The Valley of Vision*, a collection of Puritan prayers.

Prayer

"Thou hast prepared for me a feast; and though I am unworthy to sit down as guest, I wholly rest on the merits of Jesus, and hide myself beneath his righteousness. While I gaze upon the emblems of my Saviour's death, may I ponder why he died, and hear him say, 'I gave my life to purchase yours, presented myself an offering to expiate your sin, shed my blood to blot out your guilt, opened

my side to make you clean, endured your curses to set you free, bore your condemnation to satisfy divine justice.’”

In preparation for this weekend’s sermon I asked Pastor Chad if he could find some music from the section of the Psalms called “The Hallel” (Psalm 113-118). These psalms were sung during the Passover and were likely sung by Jesus and his disciples as they gathered in the upper room. Chad was able to find one song that we’ll sing after communion but was unable to find one that would work for the beginning of communion.

Since he couldn’t find one, he wrote one based on Psalm 113! Let’s stand and sing it together now.

Song: “Sing Praise”

Set-up the Elements – “Where’s the Lamb?”

In the Passover meal, one of the most important visuals was the lamb. Many years ago, Dr. Archibald Alexander was preaching on communion when he suddenly stopped, bent forward and looked earnestly at the communion table. He searched on top of the table and under the table and on the sides and then finally said, *“But, where’s our lamb?”*

Apparently he looked with such intensity and spoke so passionately that people stood up and started looking for the lamb. Dr. Alexander then began to describe in great detail all the suffering the Savior went through on the Cross and the people started weeping. That reminds me of 1 Corinthians 5:7: ***“For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.”*** Because of what our Lord did, no other lamb ever needs to be sacrificed again.

Bread and wine were two common items that were used at practically every meal but Jesus infused new meaning into them as they now serve as memorials of his sacrificial death. We use bread and grape juice and we don’t serve lamb because Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

We started by mentioning memorable meals. There’s one I left out. After landing on the moon in 1969, astronaut Buzz Aldrin marked this memorable moment by taking the first communion ever celebrated on the lunar surface. While it was

certainly incredible that man landed on the moon, an even greater moment happened when the Lord landed on earth!

Distribute the Elements

Closing

I skipped a verse earlier. Look at Mark 14:26: “*And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*” It’s quite likely that the song they sang came from Psalm 118. We’re going to end with a song based on this section of Scripture.

Closing Song: “Forever”

New Members: George and Sue Sedlak