
¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus took His place at the table, and the apostles with Him. ¹⁵ He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' ¹⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks He said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' ¹⁹ Then He took a loaf of 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.' ²⁰ And He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.'" Luke 22:14-20

As we gather here on this holy day I ask that you begin by thinking about some people you would like to share a meal with – people who are close to you. These people may not still be alive. Think of family... friends'... people close to your heart... Think of a full table of food supplied, people enjoying one another's company, and good times. Can you picture this...?

As you picture yourself with these people, now picture Jesus joining you at your table. Remember that there is something very special about Jesus, the man. He had this incredible rare ability of being able to engage with people 'on the edge' – like the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, Zacchaeus the outside, sinners, and tax-collectors. He could engage with them at their deepest level of hurt and pain. But Jesus also engaged with the well-to-do, the people of influence and affluence such as Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for Jesus out of their means.

You are with your family and friends. Jesus is present. He engages in conversation in truly deep and meaningful ways. And there is fun, and joy, and laughter. Can you imagine this...?

Now imagine that Jesus gets up from the table, and washes your feet as He did the disciples long ago. How do you feel? Are you a little embarrassed? Do you think you are not worthy of such attention? Do you feel important? And after this, as Jesus returns to the Table, He goes through the ritual of establishing the Lord's Supper. Your house, your family, your friends are the ones chosen by Jesus to be present as He institutes the Lord's Supper. How do you feel now? Can you also feel the sense of something terrible about to happen, as the disciples did long ago on that night?

But then you notice something else. Jesus is no longer present. He has gone off to the Garden to pray. And so you follow Him. You see His painful prayer in the garden. You sense something terrible is about to happen. And now the soldiers appear to take Jesus away. What are your feelings at this time?

On this Holy Day we are remembering many things: we are remembering that Jesus journeyed to the cross for us (as we more fully remember tomorrow). We remember that Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, not only calling us to a life of service and love, but reminding us that He is the One who washes away all our sin. And we remember that on this most holy day, Jesus established a meal whereby we are brought together as His people, and strengthened in life and faith.

As Jesus 'establishes' what we now know as 'Holy Communion, Jesus says, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you" Think about this. Jesus is eager to share fellowship with you.

Jesus goes on to say, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before My suffering begins." Jesus is "very eager" to share the Passover meal with them. He is excited about this. Why?

For one, this is Jesus last official time with them. These are going to be His last words to them before the cross. This is the last time He gets to fellowship with them and to share His heart and truth with them. I believe this is also a glimpse into how much Jesus desires fellowship with us. He loves to share His time with us, to bless us, to guide us, and to love us. He is "very eager" to spend time with you.

But Jesus also said, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you *before I suffer.*' This suffering is real. This suffering is important. This suffering is important. For here we see the love Jesus has for His disciples. At that time, long ago, Jesus desired to eat the Passover meal with His disciples, that He and they might have a little time together, themselves, and none besides, for private conversation, which they could not have in Jerusalem but upon this occasion. He was now about to leave them, but was very desirous to eat this Passover with them before He suffered, as if the comfort of that would carry them as they saw Jesus sufferings, and make it the easier for them. And we see this further in what follows.

We are told, "Then Jesus took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then He said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves'" (NLT). During a typical Passover Meal there were four significant cups that symbolised different things. Luke mentions two of them. This first cup is known as the cup of blessing. The word used for "gave thanks" (eucharisteeo) means to acknowledge how good grace is! One of the purposes of the Lord's Supper is for you to remember that Christ died for your sins so that you have eternal life. That is good grace! That is a blessing.

After this 'cup of blessing', Luke says, "Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then He broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me'" (NLT). Jesus would often use object lessons to help people understand who He was. Jesus referred to Himself as a door (John 10:9) and a vine (John 15:5) to name two. Here, Jesus takes this loaf of bread and says, "This is My body, which is given for you."

There is something significant going on here that we cannot see, but let's see if we can see it. Remember, this is the Passover Meal and the bread they used was a special kind of bread prepared in a special kind of way. When the loaf was finished it would be a solid loaf of bread that had been striped (like with cuts on it), it was also pierced in the preparation process, and cooked or burned in such a way that it would appear bruised. Jesus holds this piece of bread up in front of His disciples – this bread that has strips on it, been pierced, and has the appearance of being bruised and says, “This is My body, which is given for you.”

Now listen to Isaiah 53:5, “But He was wounded [pierced] for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (NKJV). Jesus held up a loaf of bread that perfectly symbolised what was about to happen to Him and said, “This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”

And then we read that “After supper He took another cup of wine (second cup) and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you’” (NLT). The New Covenant brings about a new way of approaching God.

The writer of Hebrews talks about these two things. Hebrews 10:19-22 says, “And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By His death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting Him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.”

The last statement in verse 20, Jesus says that His blood was “poured out as a sacrifice for you.” Jesus became our substitute. Jesus stands in your place. He represents you on the cross. He pays for your sin debt. He suffers for you to give you life. And He has given us a meal that we have shared in that joins us together in this suffering and death for us... for you... for all you hold in your heart...

Someone once said that, as we think about the meal that Jesus shared with His disciples on the night He was betrayed, we should not call it ‘The Last Supper’ but ‘The Lasting Supper’. It is a meal that resonates throughout the ages. It is a meal that resonates with us as God’s people, wherever we may be. That is, the Last Supper is not just a one-time event, some two-thousand years ago. Instead, Holy Communion, the Lasting Supper, is an ongoing meal, with profound implications for our past, our future, and our present. The apostle Paul’s letter, some years later to the Church at Corinth, reminded them (and us) of what Jesus had taught His disciples about the bread and the cup and said: “As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:20-26).

In his book *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, Charles Swindoll relates the story of an eighty-year-old Kenyan girl, Monica, who fell into a pit and broke her leg. Mama Njeri, an older woman, seeing what had happened, climbed into the pit to rescue Monica. In the pit a black mamba, the most poisonous snake in Africa, bit both Monica and Mama Njeri. Both ladies were rushed to a medical center; Monica improved, but tragically, Mama Njeri died. A nurse missionary explained to Monica that Mama Njeri was bitten first and thus received all of the mamba's poison. When the snake bit Monica, it had no poison left. The nurse went on to explain that Jesus had similarly taken the poison of our sin so that we can live. Monica understood and readily received Christ.

When Jesus first introduced the Communion to His disciples, He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." (1 Cor. 11:24). Jesus calls us to remember that He gave His body for you. The Hebrew word for "remembrance" encompasses much more than sentimental recalling. It also conveys the idea of reenactment, of going through an event again. This means that when you partake of the bread and the cup, the Lord wants you to reenact all that He went through for you so that it becomes fresh in your mind—not just a historical event that happened 2000 years ago. How do you do that? As you partake of the Communion, see Jesus before you, as though you are right there at Calvary. As you take the bread in your hands, see His body being broken for your wholeness. As you drink of the cup, see His blood being shed for your complete forgiveness. Meditate on this amazing truth: It was for you that the King of kings suffered! Amen.

O holy and righteous Father, thank You! I praise You for Your love in sending Your Son to suffer and die for us. I thank You for the faith Jesus demonstrated as He stared suffering and death in the face. I thank You for the great supper that lies ahead when we share in the victory of Jesus' return. Thank You for Your love, mercy, and grace; in Jesus' name. Amen.