

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Mark 14:12-26

Key Verse: 14:24

*“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,”
he said to them.*

The Lord's Supper was the last Passover meal that Jesus had with his disciples. Many people are familiar with the event, perhaps with the image in mind of the masterpiece by Leonardo Da Vinci. The Renaissance artist captured the moment when the disciples asked Jesus, “Surely not I?” after he predicted that one of them would betray him. As you look at the painting more closely, you can spot Judas Iscariot holding tightly his money bag. However, the most important thing that happened at the last supper was what Jesus taught his disciples about his upcoming sacrifice on the cross. Let's think about the meaning of Jesus' words spoken at the last supper.

I. “ONE OF YOU WILL BETRAY ME” (12-21)

We learned several things in the first part of this chapter about the situation of Jesus and his disciples. For three and a half years, Jesus worked day and night to preach the kingdom of God to the despairing people and to raise up 12 disciples as spiritual leaders for them. But the Jewish leaders were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him (1). Jesus had come to Jerusalem for the last time to become the Lamb of God. While he was in Bethany, a woman came to him and poured a whole jar of expensive perfume on him to express her love for the Lord. Jesus accepted her act of love as a preparation of his body for burial. Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them (10). They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. Judas began to watch for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to the Jewish leaders.

In this situation, today's scripture begins. Look at verse 12. *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?”* It was 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?” Eating the Passover meal was an important event for them. But they were away from home and could not afford a room for the Passover meal. So they came to Jesus and asked him about the problem.

What, then, did the Passover mean to them? The Passover was celebrated to remember the mercy of God who had delivered his people from their bondage in Egypt. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, refused to let go of his slave labor force, despite many plagues God sent. When each plague afflicted the country, Pharaoh promised to let the people go. But when each plague abated, he hardened his mind and broke his promise. Finally, Moses delivered God's ultimatum to him. Pharaoh had to choose either to let the people go or to see God strike down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh in the palace

to the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon and the firstborn of all the livestock as well (Ex 12:29). Pharaoh made a choice to have all the firstborn killed in order to feed his pride. It was the plague of the angel of death. No firstborn was spared, not even the firstborn of Pharaoh the king.

In the meantime, God provided a way of salvation for his people. The Israelites were told to slay a year-old lamb without defect. With a bunch of hyssop they were to smear the doorposts of their homes with the blood of the lamb. God promised that, when the angel of death saw the blood, he would pass over that house, leaving its residents safe. That night, all the first born of Egypt were killed. Finally, Pharaoh relented. He asked Moses to leave his country, taking all the Hebrews along with their possessions.

So the Passover meant to the Israelites God's deliverance from the yoke of slavery in Egypt. It was the commemoration of the great love of God. In order to eat the Passover, they selected a year-old lamb without blemish and sprinkled its blood on the doorpost, just as their forefathers did in Egypt. They roasted the lamb and ate the meat. Nothing was wasted. The lamb was completely sacrificed. This animal sacrifice was just foreshadow of the sacrifice that Jesus was about to make. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, would shed his precious blood on the cross to save us from the bondage of sin and death.

How did the disciples make preparations for the Passover meal? Look at verses 13-15. *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. 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?' He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."* Now this was a remarkable thing Jesus said to his disciples. Jesus spoke as if he were the owner of all the properties of the town. In reality, Jesus did not have a place to lay his head. Soon he was going to die on a cross like a criminal. But this shows that Jesus was in control of the situation. In human eyes, he might have looked as a silent lamb that was being led to slaughter. But he was no victim of circumstances. He was in full control. Everything happened in full knowledge of God. Jesus taught the disciples that he is the Owner of the universe; that everything belongs to him. He is the Creator God. When the disciples obeyed his instructions, they found that his words were true. *The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover (16).*

Finally, they were about to eat the Passover. The disciples were always excited about eating because they were often hungry. As they began to enjoy the meal, however, Jesus dropped a bombshell on them. Look at verses 17-18. *When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 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."* The shocking prediction was that one of the Twelve was going to betray Jesus. And the person was right there in the room, eating the meal with them. What an unthinkable thing to say! The Twelve had been with Jesus for the past three and a half years, sharing a common life with him. They traveled together, ate together and slept together. They were in the same boat when they ran into a fierce storm. They thought they were going to drown, but Jesus calmed the storm with the words, "Quiet! Be still!" (Mk 4:39) They also saw how Jesus fed the 5,000

with only five loaves of bread and two fish. They were a spiritual family. They meant more to one another than their own family members. Now Jesus was saying that they had a betrayer amongst them. How could this be?

Look at verse 19. *They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"* The disciples were shocked by the prediction. How could such a person sitting in the same room and eating with them as if he were still one of their brothers? They all lost their appetite. They could not eat any more. At the same time, they began to examine themselves. They were not sure of themselves. One by one they said to Jesus, "Surely not I?" Peter said to Jesus, "Surely not I?" but in the back of his mind he probably remembered how he had taken Jesus aside and rebuked him for talking about suffering and dying. Likewise, each of them questioned if it was possible for him to betray the Lord. It was a moment of self-examination for them.

It is disgusting to think about how Judas turned to Jesus and asked the question, "Surely not I?" Jesus knew what Judas had done and what he was going to do. It wasn't some wild speculation. Jesus knew that Judas had already made a deal with the Jewish leaders. So the question is why didn't Jesus confide with the other disciples and get rid of the betrayer quietly? Jesus did not do that. Instead, he indirectly told them that there was one who would betray him. Why? We learn here that Jesus loved his disciples to the end, even Judas Iscariot. Jesus wanted to help Judas to think about his wicked plan so that he might come to his senses and repent before God.

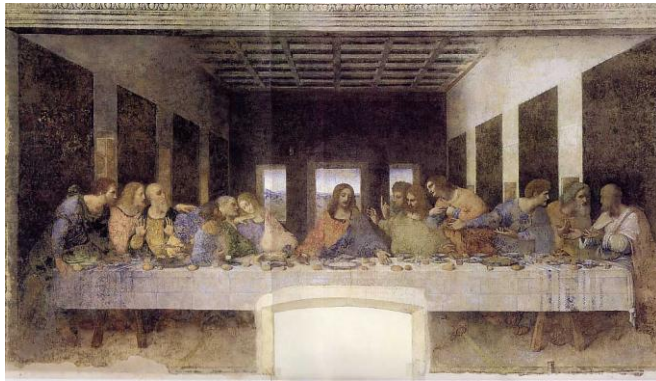
Look at verse 20. *"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me."* Dipping bread into the bowl symbolized a close relationship in their culture. This was done between close friends. Jesus dipped bread into the bowl with Judas. He showed his affection toward the man. He had a close fellowship of sharing a meal with him, fully knowing that the betrayer was looking for an opportunity to hand him over to the enemy. This is the nature of the love of Christ. What a thrill to know this love of Christ! May God help us to know this amazing, unfailing love of Christ!

Jesus loved his disciples to the end. He even loved Judas to the end. And as much as he loved the betrayer, his heart was broken to think about what Judas was going to do. Look at verse 21. *"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."* Judas' betrayal would not hinder God's work of salvation. Jesus would die on the cross as the Lamb of God according to God's redemptive plan. Jesus would obey the will of God to save the sinful humanity just as the prophets prophesied. But that doesn't mean Judas wasn't responsible for what he was going to do. His betrayal would bring woe to himself. By betraying Jesus, he became a person for whom it would have been better not to have been born. Sadly, Judas' heart was unmoved by even these penetrating words of Jesus. John 13:30 says, "As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night." Judas received Jesus' love. He was still holding the Passover bread in his hand. However, the thirty silver coins were on his mind. He had to choose between Jesus, the Savior of the world, and the reward money. He chose the darkness over the light. We shudder at Judas. But we must know that Judas only tried to get something out of Jesus. When he realized that he could not get what he wanted, he sold the Lord for money. This can happen to any

follower of Jesus if he or she does not fully commit his heart and life to Christ. May God help us not to be like Judas!

II. "THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE COVENANT" (22-26)

After Judas left the room, rejecting the amazing love of Christ, Jesus turned his attention to the remaining disciples. Look at verse 22. *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."* What does Jesus mean when he says we should take his body and eat it? Surely he doesn't mean we should become cannibals. In John chapter 6, Jesus declares that he is the bread of life. He who comes to Jesus will never go hungry, and he who believes in him will never be thirsty (Jn 6:35). Some people eat a lot when they are depressed. Still they are not satisfied. No amount of food can satisfy our souls. But Jesus is the bread of life that satisfies our souls.



So how can we eat the body of Jesus? The food we eat passes through our stomachs and nutrients are absorbed into our blood system to provide energy so that we can sustain our life. That is, the food we eat becomes part of our body. This is what it means to eat the body of Christ. Eating the body of Jesus means sharing a life-giving relationship with Jesus. We can eat the body of Christ when we accept the word of Jesus and obey it in our daily life.

The word of God and prayer are essential in maintaining our personal relationship with Jesus. John describes this relationship in John 15:5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." Whoever has a heart-to-heart relationship with Jesus has the joy of life and the meaning of life.

Look at verses 23-24. *Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.* What does "my blood of the covenant" mean? A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties. A covenant was sealed by blood. In the Old Testament, the Israelites sprinkled the blood of an animal for the forgiveness of sins. But it was only foreshadow of what Christ would do later. Jesus told his disciples that they now had a new covenant to be sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist summarized the new covenant in one sentence: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29) Jesus came to this world to die on the cross. He sacrificed himself by shedding his blood, because only his blood could wash away our dirty sins and set us free from the bondage of sin and death.

There are many people who really want to do good, but they only do the evil they don't want to do. They are miserable, not because of their human situations but because of their sins that are eating away their souls, though they often don't realize this. They are

weighed down by their burden of sin. They often look for a way out of this in the wrong places.

Sin is a terrible sickness that no doctor can heal. People are helpless before the power of sin and death. Only the blood of Jesus can heal them from their sin-sickness. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse and purify our sin-stained blood. Sick blood makes a person sick. His blood must be purified to make him a healthy person again. Likewise, the blood of Jesus can heal sin-sick people. The blood of Jesus heals our pain and sorrow, the hatred and anger in our hearts. Ultimately, the blood of Jesus recreates us as new persons so that we can see the love of God. Those who are cleansed by the blood of Jesus also have new desires to love God and to serve him.

God had promised that he would send his Son to die on the cross, to shed his blood for our sins. By shedding his precious blood, Jesus restored God's image in us. Through the shedding of his blood, the old passed away and the new has come (2Co 5:17). His blood enables us to be right with God so that we can enter the kingdom of God. We have the promise of eternal life. This is the blood of the covenant. That is why Jesus said, *"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."*

Let us read verse 24 again. *"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.* It was because of our sins that Jesus had to shed his innocent blood on the cross. So we must remember this wonderful grace of Jesus as part of our worship. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

After the supper, they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives (26). There Jesus prayed for his upcoming crucifixion. The human Jesus was overwhelmed by the approaching suffering and death. But he went to the Mount of Olives to pray. He struggled in his prayer to overcome his anguish and obey the will of God.

In today's passage, we learn how important it is for us to make a full commitment to Christ as we follow him so that we may not become an opportunist like Judas Iscariot. We also learn that Jesus sacrificed his entire self as the Lamb of God in order to save us from our sin and death. May God help us to eat the bread of Jesus and follow him as his committed disciples! May the blood of Jesus cleanse all our sin-sickness! May the blood of Jesus cleanse the sin of our pride and make us pure and humble before God in this generation!