

A Last Supper

Luke 22:1-38; Exodus 12:1-14

Context: Jesus has entered the city of Jerusalem to rapturous crowds, even throwing their coats down in front of him like a conquering king. He has been in the temple courts teaching each day as the Passover comes near. Huge crowds flock to hear him and the Jewish leaders are getting increasingly nervous about his role. Problems are brewing and they start to plan more directly his downfall.

Dinner experiences!

My family meals – noisy, 8, often 10 people. Eat fast, talk fast!

My mum's 80th... a poignant moment in many ways. Might be her last "significant" birthday. It's why I am going to spend a weekend on the Murray with her after Easter.

This "dinner" is the 7th meal described in Luke's Gospel. It is also a poignant moment. Jesus has organised this Passover with his disciples and despite its somewhat somber tone it is clear Jesus is in control. He tells the disciples what to do to find the room prepared – women normally carried water pots not men – and then it begins.

It is a meal full of meaning –

- it intertwines history from the beginning of the Jewish nation and culture Ex 12:14 – 14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance." - indeed the Jewish people still celebrate Passover today);
- points to the nature of Jesus' sacrifice so we can be forgiven our wrongdoing against God ;
- sets the content of our own "Lord's Supper" that we and other Christian churches celebrate week by week;
- and moves our minds to look forward to a time when Jesus' kingdom has come in its fullness.

Jesus has "eagerly desired" to eat the Passover. "epithumia" – Greek... It is with great desire that I have desired. Deep, deep desire.

These are to be his last words to them before he faces his death on the cross. What he says is weighted with great significance, like the last words of any person, and he has longed for this opportunity to speak to them and to share the Passover.

But its not the nicest dinner – there is betrayal, fighting over privilege (who gets the best positions - a lecture is needed), a direct rejection of Peter's confidence about being a supporter of Jesus and it ends with a curious discussion about swords!

(Jesus response by the way to their producing of two swords with the retort -"that's enough" - is saying, you will in the future need to protect yourself and provide for yourself. But he is not suggesting they use swords in armed struggle as events in the Garden of Gethsemane later are to show when the disciples use a sword to attack those who come to arrest him and Jesus rebukes them.)

Betrayal – who is responsible?

Chief priests, Judas, Satan, the disciples, God?

We know from the end of chapter 21 that there are crowds of people coming early each morning into the temple area to hear Jesus each day. The Jewish leaders are thinking - “we’ve got to do something, this is getting out of hand” – but the crowds love him so they need an inside man to help arrest him out of sight of his supporters.

We are told that Satan enters Judas – I believe the devil is real – and he has been defeated by Jesus, but is still in his death throes – and I believe that he still seeks to influence and at times take over people. This can only happen if someone opens themselves up to such things. So while Satan clearly influences Judas, Judas is still responsible.

But then we read these verses that Jesus says in the middle of the meal... v20

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. ²¹ But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. ²² The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!”

If “the Son of Man will go as it has been decreed” is Judas responsible?

The Bible makes it clear that while God is sovereign, and nothing happens without him foreknowing it all – the cross doesn’t catch Jesus by surprise for example – that we are still responsible for our actions. We have real choice and freewill, being accountable for our actions.

While we must have a strong doctrine of the sovereignty of God, otherwise he stops being God, we certainly experience and exercise our own choices, for which we are to be held accountable by God. Someone has written - “As with all secretly plotted sin, God is there”.¹ Judas had choices all the way along to be a true follower of Jesus, but he doesn’t make them.

It also seems the disciples are worried that they might inadvertently “betray” Jesus, maybe by a misplaced word here or there – hence their confused discussion as to which one might betray him.

Peter’s problem, foretold by Jesus – although it is a betrayal of sorts - is cowardice, but not unforgiveable (as Jesus’ words of confidence in Peter’s future role as a leader which is hinted at here tell us), which might give us comfort if we struggle sometimes ourselves to be faithful followers of Jesus.

What’s Happening Here? (in this meal)

Past

It looks back, to the great defining moment for the nation of Israel, when the promises to ancient Abraham started being seen to be fulfilled. A rag-tag bunch of slaves overcame the most powerful nation on earth (Egypt) through God’s intervention.

The Passover – the slain lamb a reminder that sacrifice enabled them to be free (read Exodus 12 for more detail) and salvation came, not by their efforts, but by the hand of a gracious God.

¹ Bock, 351

Present

This past action of God in the Passover finds new focus in the present as Jesus links his body “given” and his blood shed with what is to happen on the cross. The lamb then becomes the lamb of God now. You wonder what the disciples made of this in the Passover meal?

Pardon the brevity of this explanation, as there is a wide variety of interpretation of what Jesus says here, but to me it is clearly symbolic, not literal. Jesus is saying breaking and eating bread and sharing a cup in this manner is a recognition of his death and in some way a participation in it – as other parts of the New Testament tell us. It isn’t turning into his body and blood That’s why taking communion is a particularly *Christian* thing to do and for those who believe in Jesus.

Jesus speaks of the new *covenant* in his blood poured out. It is a backward reference to the Passover and the old agreement God had with the nation of Israel, and a forward reference to his suffering and death on the cross and the new pledge that God makes to offer salvation to all who would accept it. The rescue of a nation from Egypt now moves to Jesus’ rescue offer for the whole world.

Sanctum – a dramatic movie about a sinkhole in PNG. People are trapped by the water in the caves and with the water rising the leader says, follow me, in this way, and you will survive. We need to share the breathing equipment.

One man, panicked and threatened by the water takes the last proper breathing apparatus and jumps into the water – it’s the last time we see him alive. He doesn’t take up the offer of salvation from one who knows how to get through the trial they are facing.

It is acceptance of Jesus’ offer of salvation through his body given and blood shed on the cross that enables us to have salvation.

Whatever else happens as he enacts what will become the basis for our communion services, the disciples don’t seem to understand. They move from worrying about betraying Jesus to arguing over who is the greatest. The context is Passover, sacrifice, and servant-hood. The grace of God is being remembered in the rescue from Egypt and about to be seen in Jesus. It is extraordinary after such a meal laden with deep significance of sacrifice that they should act that way – yet we, who have been forgiven much can often forget too the mercy of God and not show it to others. We who join in communion, walk away into our normal week and forget the transformation that Christ’s death should bring too our lives.

Ongoing (until...)

Did you know Nov 21st is a UN international day? Its World Television Day. Oct 9? World Post Day. Your children should remember June 1 – Global Day of Parents. (Dec 7 Phil? International Civil Aviation Day.)

There are about 114 International Days. Some of course are very important – some... maybe less...

We have days when we remember those who gave their lives in war, we have Mothers and Father’s Day - why? Because we are liable to forget important events or people and need to be reminded!

V19 says ¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

Jesus in this symbolic act of broken bread and poured out cup, has helped the disciples and us remember – so they, and we, don't forget Jesus and what he has done - His sacrifice and gift of life for us. And it's worked – 2,000 years later we still continue this meaningful tradition.

The Passover was a “lasting ordinance” for Israel, this “Last Supper” is too, for Christians. We keep remembering Jesus...

... until

The Future

... until he comes

Jesus says “For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”
- a Last Supper, not the “last” one before his death but a last until heaven...

So the Lord's Supper we celebrate looks forward to Jesus' return.
That's why in our services we call out, “Come Lord Jesus!”

What do We Do?

Celebrate

The death of Jesus when we gather. That he was prepared to sacrifice himself for us. Communion is a celebration! While we may at times be somber and reflective, the overwhelming preponderance of our thinking and feeling should be celebration.

Remember

Do this in “remembrance” – Hebrew concept “zikron” – to “grip one's mind”². Every time we share in communion we are being gripped again by the immensity of God's activity in Jesus to enable us to be brought into friendship with God.

This is more rightly called ***The Lord's Supper*** rather than the Last Supper as we are remembering him.

And when we celebrate communion here in this church we need to ensure that any familiarity with it does not stop us refreshing ourselves with the profound, personal reminder that Jesus died *for us*, he did what he did on the cross *for us*, because of a deep, abiding love.

Look Forward

I love smorgasbords... Lots of choice, lots of food – eat what you like, ignore the healthy stuff you'd normally eat out of politeness.

Quite a few of Jesus' parables are about meals in heaven – images of feasting and banquets!
The

We look forward to Jesus' second coming and the heavenly banquet that will be the next “Supper” with Jesus. We look forward, with a sense of joyful expectation, to when we will see him face to face, when God's purposes and plans for this world will have come to their fruition and his glory will be more clearly seen.

² Bock, p350

As people of this earth we can sometimes act as though this is all we've got. In Jesus we live with this sense of the future always in our consciousness, we look forward with anticipation to that heavenly banquet that awaits us and cry out "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Amen

Luke 22:1-38

Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, ² and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. ³ Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. ⁴ And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. ⁵ They were delighted and agreed to give him money. ⁶ He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

⁹ "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.

¹⁰ He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, ¹¹ and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹² He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there."

¹³ They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And 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 again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.^[a] ²¹ But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. ²² The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!" ²³ They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵ Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶ But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. ²⁸ You are those who have stood by me in my trials. ²⁹ And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

³¹ "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you,

Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

33 But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."

34 Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

35 Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?"

"Nothing," they answered.

36 He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. 37 It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."

38 The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords."

"That's enough!" he replied.

Exodus 12:1-14

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. 3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb^[a] for his family, one for each household. 4 If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. 5 The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. 6 Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. 7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. 8 That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. 9 Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. 10 Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. 11 This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.

12 "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. 13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance.