

A Sermon for Maundy Thursday
Luke 22:14-20
by Peter Bockoven

The Text

14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. **15** And he said to them, “I have earnestly 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** And he took a cup, and when he had given 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** And he took 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 likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

The Sermon

- I. On this day, we remember the night our Lord Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper: the bread and the wine, joined together with Christ’s body and blood by the power of his Word: given for us to eat and to drink, for the forgiveness of all of our sins. In this Supper we receive Christ himself, and all of his gifts.
- II. But is what Christ instituted on this day something entirely new? If we only had the New Testament Scriptures, it might seem like it is. But in reality, it is not. Instead, the Lord’s Supper is the fulfillment of something old. It’s something that the Old Testament pointed forward to and anticipated.
- III. Rather than being something completely new, the Lord’s Supper is a continuation and greater fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover meal, described in Exodus 12. When Moses was delivering the people of Israel from slavery, the last plague that God inflicted on Egypt was the death of every firstborn in the land. Through this final plague, God would weaken Egypt, and finally bring his people out of slavery.
- IV. Now this plague could possibly affect the Israelite people, too. Therefore, that the Israelites might not be afflicted by this plague, but obtain their salvation, God gave them a ritual meal, or ceremony: the Passover meal. For it, God instructed the people to take an unblemished lamb, to kill it on the night the plague would strike Egypt, to take its blood and pour it over their doorposts, and then to eat it with unleavened bread. God would then *pass over* everyone who kept the Passover meal from the plague. And then, after eating, they would exit Egypt. And every year they were commanded to have this same meal again, so that they might remember their original salvation from Egypt.
- V. That was part of the purpose of the Passover meal. But another part of its purpose was to direct the Israelites’ attention toward their upcoming and ultimate salvation through the Christ. Remember, God had promised Abraham in the book of Genesis, that all the families of the earth would be blessed through a special descendant of his. And so God frequently gave

the Israelites pictures and foreshadowings of this future, coming descendant, who is Jesus Christ. The Passover Meal was one of those pictures.

- VI. It pointed to Christ, first, by foreshadowing his death and crucifixion. Just as a lamb was killed at the Passover, and prevented physical and temporal death from coming to the people: so also Jesus, the true lamb of God, was killed, and prevented spiritual and eternal death from coming to his people. So Peter writes: "Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." Christ brought us to God by his death: and if he has brought us to God, that means he has removed from us spiritual and eternal death, that separated us from God.
- VII. And second, the Passover meal it pointed to the ceremonial meal that Christ would institute. Just as God gave his Old Testament people a way to connect them to their temporal salvation: so also Christ gives his New Testament people a way to connect them to their spiritual salvation. Because in the Lord's Supper, we receive the true body and blood of Christ. We receive the body that hanged on the cross, and the blood that he poured out for us. We receive the price that Christ paid for our salvation.
- VIII. So our Lord Jesus fulfills the Old Testament Passover. And he institutes a meal, similar to the Passover meal, to connect us to his salvation. But if this is just the fulfillment of something old, how is it something new? It's something new, because it is something far greater than the Old Testament Passover. You see, Jesus didn't just give his church the same Old Testament Passover Meal, under a new form. He gives us a greater meal than the first one.
- IX. The Lord's Supper is greater, because it connects us to something greater. It connects us not to a temporal or material deliverance. But to God himself, in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. Whenever we eat the bread, and drink the wine, we truly eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. In a supernatural way, beyond our reason, Christ truly dwells within us, his people: and we, joined to him, live by him.
- X. And the Lord's Supper is greater also, because it delivers us from greater enemies. The Old Passover delivered his people from Pharaoh and his Empire. A great enemy, to be sure. But a temporal enemy. A human enemy. But the New Passover delivers us from our greatest and from our ultimate enemies. Enemies that we cannot see or observe with our natural eye. From sin, death, and the power of the devil. The New Passover brings us not into a new, temporal or material life: but into a new, spiritual, and eternal life.
- XI. My friends, at times we might wish and hope for temporal or material salvation. Just as the Old Testament Israelites received. At times, in our heart, we might value that salvation more than spiritual salvation. That is why the Scriptures so frequently encourage us not to put our ultimate hope in things in the earth: for example, Psalm 146: "Put not your trust in princes ... in whom there is no salvation." And Psalm 62: "If riches increase, set not your heart on them." Because this is our natural tendency. As a result, at times we might lose sight of the great gifts that Christ our Lord gives us through this Supper.

XII. But whenever this happens, we need to firmly press into our mind what God truly gives us here. This is no joke that he has given us in this Sacrament. This is nothing trivial. What he gives us here, is the fullness of the deepest desires of our heart.

XIII. Because in this Supper, your Lord Jesus gives you the forgiveness of your sins. All of the evil things you have done throughout life, that pain your heart and conscience: in this Supper, you receive the sure and trustworthy sign, that all is forgiven. That God will not punish you eternally for those things. That God is your loving Father through Christ's sacrifice for you. That Jesus dwells with you, that he loves you, and has removed your sin.

XIV. And in this Supper, you have union with God himself! And if you have union with God again, you have true life itself. This is the reason you exist at all in the world: to live with God. And in this Supper again, you do live in God again, and he lives in you.

XV. And in this Supper, you receive eternal salvation! Not just for your soul or spirit, but also for your body. It gives you forgiveness of sins: and as a result, resurrection from physical death. Truly these things are greater than any material or temporal gift. But we do not see them with our physical eyes yet: and therefore, it is difficult at times to appreciate them.

XVI. Therefore, when you receive this Holy Supper, do not simply look at the bread and wine. True, you eat bread and you drink wine: but that is not all you take. Look beyond those things, in a way, to what is supernaturally in and under them: to Christ your dear Lord, who here is giving you eternal life, forgiveness of all of your sins, and your salvation, in this New and Greater Passover Meal. Amen.