

"The Disciples' Passover" - Mark 14:1-31

Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the central Player in God's plan of redemption. Without Him, none of us would have any hope at all. Without Jesus, we would remain slaves to sin. Without Jesus, we would bear the wrath of Almighty God. Without Jesus, we would be doomed to an eternity of agony, suffering in the pit of hell. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. (John 14:6) Before the universe was created, God determined to sacrifice the Lamb without spot or blemish during a particular Passover feast and nothing would stand in the way.

This morning, as we continue our study of Passion Week as it is presented in the Gospel of Mark, we are going to begin to see how God orchestrates this sacrifice. He works all things together according to the counsel of His will. He even uses the efforts of sinful, depraved men to accomplish His goal.

Nothing would stand in His way.

As we begin Chapter 14, we see the plotting of the Jewish religious leaders. They would conspire with one of Jesus' own, an individual who was chosen as one of the Twelve, an individual who had every opportunity to recognize the Son of God, an individual who, as the son of perdition, would betray Messiah to His enemies.

After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people." (Mark 14:1-2)

This was nothing less than a murder conspiracy. These Chief Priests and scribes had determined some time ago that they needed to put Jesus to death, but the last thing they wanted to do was murder Him during the Passover feast.

The population of Jerusalem, normally about 50,000, had swelled to over a quarter of a million. Jesus had entered Jerusalem to great fanfare. The religious pilgrims were convinced He was Messiah. Of course, they had a wrong theology about what Messiah would accomplish. They were expecting a revolutionary, a political, earthly King, one who would rebel against Rome and reestablish the Davidic kingdom on earth. Nonetheless, they were enthusiastic about this Jesus. They hung on His every word. He was immensely popular and the religious leaders knew it would be incredibly dangerous for them if they were to kill Him at the height of His popularity.

So, Yeah, we're going to kill Him, they decided, but let's wait until all these folks go home. Then we'll trick Him somehow. Of course, God would have none of that because the Lamb of God needed to be sacrificed at this particular Passover.

Now, beginning with verse 3, we have a flashback as Mark gives us more information about this murder conspiracy. He begins to relate an event that happened prior to Passion Week. You might not pick this up by reading Mark's account, but in John's Gospel, the timing is identified explicitly.

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. (John 12:1-2)

Six days before the Passover – that would be Friday night, probably, because Jews from Galilee and Perea celebrated Passover a day earlier than those from Judea, which would be on Thursday night. Jews from Judea celebrated Passover on Friday. That might seem strange, but has to do with how they counted the days in their province. Plus, it had some practical implications in that it takes a good deal of time to sacrifice enough lambs for a quarter million people.

We pick up some interesting details from John. Lazarus was there. His sister Martha was serving and his other sister Mary would perform a beautiful act of devotion, an act of worship. But the reason Mark places the event at this point in his account is that he wants to call our attention to the Judas plot. Judas Iscariot would be unmasked as a thief and a traitor. He was a guy interested in living his best life now and let me tell you, it really didn't work out well for him at all.

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply. (Mark 14:3-5)

Again, the Apostle John identifies the woman as Mary, the sister of Lazarus. This alabaster flask, would have been a long-necked container, probably with a stopper in the opening. Typically, the oil would be applied in very small amounts. Spikenard was made of fragrances imported from India and as some of the disciples mentioned, it was worth 300 denarii – that's a year's wages for a common laborer.

Mary didn't dole the oil out drop by drop; she broke the flask and poured the entire contents on Jesus' head and feet. She also wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. It was an act of love, of devotion and of worship. And yes, it cost her dearly, in terms of its monetary value, but to her, Jesus was worth it, and more. He had raised her beloved brother from the dead after he had been in the tomb four days!

Of course, she took a fair amount of flack for her action. Again, from John, we learn that it was Judas who led the attack.

This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. (John 12:6)

Jesus quickly came to her defense.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." (Mark 14:6-9)

And guess what? We are recounting her story this morning. Listen, it is never inappropriate to honor Jesus. Our chief aim in life must be to glorify Him. And so often, when we rationalize our actions, we try to couch it in terms that sound noble. Like Judas. "Hey, we could have helped the poor." But really, like Judas, what we really want to do is help ourselves.

For Judas, this was apparently the last straw. He was not following Jesus because of who the Lord is. He was looking to exalt himself, to enrich himself. He expected Jesus to become King, and then Judas would find himself in a position of power, influence and great wealth. But Jesus kept telling them, "No, I'm going to Jerusalem to die." So, at that moment, Judas apparently decided to salvage what he could out of the situation before it was too late.

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him. (Mark 14:10-11)

The Judas plot was hatched even before the triumphal entry. The conspiracy to murder the Son of God was in the works.

Now we return to Mark's account of Passion week. It is now Thursday and because they were Galileans, this was the day to celebrate the Passover meal.

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?" And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" ' Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us." So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover. (Mark 14:12-16)

From Luke's account, we learn that the two disciples were Peter and John. Jesus gives them a rather cryptic instruction. "Go meet a man carrying a pitcher of water." That would have been quite unusual. Carrying water was considered women's work, so seeing a guy with a water pitcher would definitely identify him as the right one. But why didn't Jesus just give them the address, or tell them whose house the upper room was in? It's almost a spy-verses-spy thing.

I think the reason is that Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him. If He revealed the location of their Passover meal in front of all the disciples, Judas would have passed that information along to the council. The upper room would have been an ideal place to arrest Him. It was isolated, away from the crowds. But Jesus intended to share this last Passover meal with His disciples without interruption.

Peter and John were sent to prepare the meal and I don't think they returned. Jesus and the remaining twelve would walk there after the meal was ready.

In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me." And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, "Is it I?" And another said, "Is it I?" He answered and said to them, "It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born." (Mark 14:17-21)

Once again, we get a little more detail from John. After Jesus dropped this little bombshell, we read ...

Simon Peter therefore motioned to [John] to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night. (John 13:24-30)

Jesus knew exactly what Judas was going to do. It was a horrible betrayal and a heinous sin. But God would use even this darkest of acts to work out His perfect plan of redemption.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (Mark 14:22-25)

Remember, Judas is already gone and then Jesus institutes the Lord's supper. This is a memorial and we are instructed to repeat it often. Here at Canyon Community Church, we celebrate the Lord's supper on the first Sunday of every month. It reminds us of what our salvation cost Jesus. But more than that, it illustrates the New Covenant. This would be the last Passover, because from that point forward, we no longer commemorate the liberation of Israel from Egypt. We commemorate our liberation from the penalty of sin. They type is replaced with the antitype.

Likewise, as Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed on the cross at Calvary, the ritual sacrifice specified by Levitical Law also became obsolete.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. (Hebrews 10:4)

By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:10)

Our commemoration of the Lord's supper is an important thing. It is a holy thing. It is an ordinance given to us by the command of the Lord. But it is not some sort of magic rite. When Jesus said, "Take, eat; this is my body.", He was standing right there before His disciples. They understood that it wasn't really His body they were eating. And when He said, "This is My blood," they knew it wasn't really His blood. It was symbolic. And it is still symbolic. It is a memorial that reminds us of His sacrifice. We are not really eating the Lord's body and drinking the Lord's blood.

The Passover meal was thus finished.

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mark 14:26)

The Mount of Olives was on the way back to Bethany and the disciples might have thought they were heading back to the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha to spend the night. But Jesus knew that He had another appointment to keep. So on the Mount of

Olives, He would stop to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, He would be arrested, because Judas knew that was where they could find Him.

Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP WILL BE SCATTERED.' "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." (Mark 14:27-28)

Jesus was going to face the greatest injustice ever committed and He would face it utterly alone. All His friends would be scattered, all would desert Him. Even God the Father would turn His back on the beloved Son. But what looked like the worst defeat ever would turn out to be the greatest victory ever. See what He said? "After I have been raised ..."

Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

It was the only way. It was the only way that we could be reconciled to God. And although it breaks my heart to see what my sin did to Jesus, I am so grateful that by His stripes, I am healed.

Have you accepted that marvelous gift? Can you believe that Jesus died for you? Can you believe that He was raised from the dead so that you could walk with Him, and talk with Him, and submit to His Lordship? I so pray that everyone here can shout Amen! To those questions. Don't try to justify yourselves because you will fail. Just accept the gift of Jesus Christ. Come to terms with your depravity and accept the grace of God.

Peter had not yet come to terms with his depravity. Peter had not yet figured out that he was incapable of loving Jesus as he should. He was planning to stay loyal to Jesus no matter what.

Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all said likewise. (Mark 14:29-31)

Well, we're going to see how that worked out for Peter and the boys next week. But let me just remind you that you will never remain loyal to Jesus on your own. It is why you need the Holy Spirit. It is why you must be born again! Just confess your bankrupt condition to the Lord of the universe and ask Him for the faith to believe. Pray like this:

"Lord, please, increase my faith. Thank you for purchasing my salvation at Calvary. I have nothing to offer, so with empty hands I come to You. Save me, Jesus and keep me saved!"