

The Surprise of the Supper

- Mark 14:12-25
- Time is short for Jesus. He knows that in less than 24 hours, he will have been delivered over and will be making his way to the cross. He spends his final day with his disciples and eats his final meal with them. We call it the Lord's Supper, but for them it was the final Passover. You might say the completed Passover, when the true and perfect Passover lamb would offer himself for the sins of the world, once and for all. Jesus did not just preside over this feast; he was the feast. Let's look at this passage today under three main points: The Sovereignty of the Savior, the Sorrow of the Disciples, and the Surprise of the Supper.
- **The Sovereignty of the Savior**
- As Jesus moves deliberately toward the cross, he continues to show that he is in complete control of all that is about to happen. There is not a whisper, not the slightest hint, that he is desperate or fearful about an evil plot that is being carried out against him. He said in John's gospel, "No one takes (my life) from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again." (John 10:18)
- As James Edwards says, Jesus displays "a sovereign freedom and authority to follow a course he has freely chosen in accordance with God's plan. Judas and others may act against him, but they do not act *upon* him." We see the sovereignty of the Lord in several ways. We see it in the way he sends two disciples, just as he did before his triumphal entry, to make arrangements for the Passover meal, and everything was arranged just as he said it would be. Every detail, from the man carrying the jug of water who meets them in town, to the large upper room fully furnished that has been prepared for them. Jesus knows what he is doing and what is needed.
- We see Jesus' sovereignty in the timing of the last meal itself, during the Passover, one of the most important celebrations of the Jewish people. It looked back to the night that God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt. Ten plagues were poured out on Egypt, culminating with the final one, when God sent the angel of death through the land and killed every firstborn child and beast. But God made a way of escape for those who believed. The way of escape was a lamb, which every family would slaughter and eat, and spread the blood of that lamb on the doorposts of their houses. So that when the angel of death went through the land, those whose houses were covered by the blood would be passed over. It is no mistake that Jesus' last meal this side of the cross was the Passover meal. As Paul wrote, "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." (1 Cor. 5:7)
- We see most remarkably that Jesus was sovereign over his own betrayal. He knew who would betray him and he allowed it to happen. But neither Jesus nor Judas were pawns. Jesus willingly took up the cross that was foreordained for him and chosen by him. Judas also willingly sold his master for 30 pieces of silver, though that was exactly what was foreordained. Jesus says, "For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." (verse 21) Edwards writes, "Divine providence neither cancels

human freedom nor relieves responsibility for moral choices.” Judas did what Judas wanted to do. Just as the other disciples did. Because don’t forget. Though Judas was the only traitor in the formal sense, all the disciples would betray Jesus. Judas does so for greed; Peter, James and John do so in the garden from weakness when they fall asleep instead of praying; all of them do so when Jesus is arrested, as it says in verse 50, “And they all left him and fled.” Finally, Peter does so three times out of fear, when asked if he knows Jesus. They each did what they chose to do at that time. And that is true of each of us. It is only by God’s grace that we can lay down what we want to do when what we want to do is the wrong thing that will bring harm to ourselves or to others. Next, let’s consider...

- **The Sorrow of the Disciples (verses 17-19)**
- The Passover meal would last for a few hours, but at some point during the meal, Jesus says the last thing the disciples wanted to hear: “One of you will betray me.” Jesus is the one these men have left everything for. They have followed him for three years. At this moment, though, their sorrow is not for Jesus, that he will be betrayed into the hands of those who have been plotting to kill him almost since the very beginning of his ministry. Their sorrow is for themselves, their greatest fear is that they would be the one he is talking about. One by one they ask him, “Is it I?” One of the church fathers, Origen, wrote about this moment that the disciples “believed Christ’s words more than their own consciousness.” Most of them are deeply devoted to Jesus and many of them would eventually die for him, but his words cut them like a knife. The thought of doing anything to betray their Lord was more than they could stand. “Is it I?” they ask, one after another. Jesus answers their question that his betrayer is one of the twelve, one who is dipping his bread in the dish with him. He is an insider, someone who is a close follower, which makes it even worse. The closer the betrayer, the deeper the wounds. Again we see the sovereignty of our Lord and Savior. He walked with Judas and loved Judas and taught Judas for three years. On the night he knows Judas will betray him, Jesus washed his traitor’s feet, served him the Passover meal, and ate with him. Later that evening, Jesus would not refuse the kiss of his betrayer. Finally, let’s consider...
- **The Surprise of the Supper (verses 22-25)**
- As we have talked about before, the Passover meal was an important time for every Jewish family, and everything in it had significance that pointed back to the deliverance of Israel from slavery. But we know since the last Passover that Jesus celebrated on the earth that everything about it was always pointing forward, as well, to the deliverance of believers from sin and eternal death. John the Baptist said of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) Jesus has already surprised the disciples with his announcement that one of them would betray him, but there are other surprises to come. The disciples were intimately familiar with the Passover celebration and knew exactly what was to be said when. It was always a family affair, which means women and children were always present, and the youngest boy would have an important part to play. He would ask the questions that had been asked for hundreds of years, and his father (or the mother, in the event the father was no longer

there) would answer each question in turn as he re-told the story of the Exodus. And by the way, Mark abbreviates the Passover meal in his Gospel, and he doesn't specifically mention women and children being present, but most believe they were there. Edwards writes that one indication is that Mark writes in 15:41 "there were also many women who came up with him to Jerusalem." It stands to reason that they would not have been excluded from a ceremony of which they were a constituent part. Also, there was a large room prepared, which would not have been necessary for only 13 men. Finally, when Jesus is asked who will betray him, he answers, "One of the twelve." That clarification would be unnecessary if it were only the twelve who were in the room with Jesus.

- The greatest surprise of the meal comes when Jesus speaks after breaking the bread. The normal blessing would be, "Blessed are thou, O Lord our God, king of the world, who brings forth bread from the earth." Jesus may have said that as a blessing, but then he added, "Take; this is my body." What did Jesus mean? If Jesus spoke his native tongue, Aramaic, the meaning for "my body" would be "my person," or "my whole being." Even in the Greek, the word used here is not the word for "flesh," but the word for "body," or even, "being." Jesus is offering, not his flesh and blood, but himself to his disciples, and all of us who take communion. He connects the first Passover to the last Passover by instituting the Lord's Supper, which commemorates the gift of Jesus' body and blood on the cross for our atonement. When Jesus says, "This is my body," the best way to understand this is through metaphor. Jesus said in John 6, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger." Here he says, "Take, this is my body." Edwards writes that Jesus is using metaphor here as well; "The bread *means* or *conveys* my body."
- The medieval Catholic church began to teach that when Jesus said, "This is my body," he meant that it was his actual body. This belief is still taught in the Catholic church today; it is called transubstantiation, which means the bread and wine are the actual body and blood of Christ. The reformers rejected that idea, and Calvin wrote in the 1500's that because Jesus was a man, he could not be in more than one place at a time, so it is impossible for him to be physically present each time communion is celebrated. Instead, Calvin said, Jesus is spiritually present. So, the bread and wine are not the actual body of Christ, and neither are they mere symbols. Instead, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, Jesus is spiritually present.
- Then Jesus gets to the 3rd of the 4 cups of wine that are shared during a Passover meal, and he uses metaphor again: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." The Jews were taught that the life of a creature was in its blood. Jesus says that he is pouring out his very life for them. And the old covenant, which could only be maintained by the constant shedding of new blood from goats and bulls and lambs was being replaced with the new covenant, with the imperishable blood of the Lamb of God. Read Hebrews 9:11-28 for a wonderful teaching about the difference between the first covenant and the new covenant. Here is one verse: "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (verse 14) The blood of animals could only sanctify the

flesh, and that for a short time. "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin," John writes. -1 John 1:7

- What about the fourth cup? Jesus answers that in verse 25. "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Jesus does not cut off the celebration of the Lord's Supper. He extends it. He says the cup that would normally bring the celebration to an end would be enjoyed at the very beginning of an endless time of fellowship in God's kingdom! Amen.
- Prayer
- Greet One Another