

Christ's Sacrifice and Christ's Feast

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[0 : 00] My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you are new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember we're in Jesus' last week here before His death on the cross. And last week, we took a look at what was going on with Jesus and Judas, and we saw the preparations that Jesus was making.

He had to essentially sneak His way towards the Passover, and so we looked at Jesus' control in that situation as He made His way to the cross. And then we also looked at Judas' warning, the warning of being hard-hearted and complacent with sin.

And so we just had the beauty of Jesus, the danger of sin. You'll remember it's some basic reminders. We're continuing that story this week, and we're once again just going to take a look at Jesus, take a look at Jesus in His beauty and His love, in one of the most famous passages in all of Scripture, which is the institution of the Lord's Supper.

[1 : 32] And so our question is very simple, which is how does Jesus feeding His disciples continue to strengthen us now? How does Jesus feeding His disciples continue to strengthen us now?

It's with that that I'm going to invite you to turn with me to God's Word. You can turn in your Bible, you can turn on your phone, you can turn in your worship guide. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word, and God tells us that His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, which reminds us that He has not left us to stumble alone in the dark, but instead He's given us His Word to show us the way to go.

And so that's why we read now Mark chapter 14, starting at verse 22. And as they were eating, He took bread, and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to them, saying, Take, this is my body.

And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And He said to them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

[2 : 49] I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in heaven, we thank You that You have given us Your Word to guide us and instruct us and encourage us.

We ask that You would do that this morning, that You would use this story, this true story of Jesus and His disciples to capture our hearts and our minds and our imaginations and our affections, that we would see Jesus in His love and His care and His sacrifice, and that You would cause us more and more to want to follow Him, love Him, serve Him, obey Him.

We ask these things in His mighty name. Amen. Amen. In 2014, National Geographic magazine ran this article called The Joy of Food.

And in that, they mentioned the story of a man named Robert Falcon Scott who helped lead the Discovery expedition to Antarctica in the early 1900s. And of course, this is a place of brutal conditions where it's easy for them to get beaten down with the challenges that they face.

And so, Midwinter Day came, and Midwinter was the day where the day was the shortest and the night was the longest. And so, they decided what they were going to do to make it through. That

was to throw a feast.

[4 : 15] So, they slaughtered 45 sheep there on their adventure. And so, the article goes on to tell us this about this great feast that they had on what would be their hardest day.

The cold, the darkness, and the isolation were forgotten for a while. And then they quote Robert Falcon Scott, With such a dinner, we agreed that life in the Antarctic regions was worth living. They needed a meal to strengthen them in a tough situation. And we can say the same thing about this story here with Jesus and his disciples. They also need to be heartened by a feast in dark circumstances.

You'll remember from last week that Judas is actively at work to betray Jesus. There is a warrant out for Jesus' arrest. We saw the elaborate plan that Jesus had to put together so that he could make it to the upper room without being detected.

He had to set up this safe house because there was a price on his head to allow them to celebrate the Passover together. So, it shouldn't surprise us at all that the disciples certainly needed strengthening in this situation.

[5 : 31] And in fact, that's the exact meaning of the Passover. That's the purpose of the Passover. I told you this last week, and I'm going to tell you it again this week. Passover is from Exodus chapter 12 when God's people are heading out of Egypt, and God, as his last punishment on the Egyptians, kills the firstborn of every Egyptian family.

But he saves his own people from that curse. He tells them, here's what you need to do. And we read about this, Exodus chapter 12, already this morning. You're going to sacrifice a Passover lamb.

You're going to take that blood, and you're going to paint it on the door frames. And so, when God moves through, when he passes through Egypt, he will pass over you.

Your firstborn is going to be saved. And that's what he actually uses that phrase. You may remember it earlier from this service, that he will pass over them. And so, that's what they're celebrating in this meal.

This meal is meant to remind them of God's mercy to them in the past. Look at how God has cared for you as a people. Take strength. It's been noted at this meal, there is no mention of a Passover lamb, though, because Jesus himself is the lamb of this meal.

[6 : 50] There was a lamb in the past that reminded them of their redemption from Egypt. There's going to be the blood of the ultimate lamb, Christ himself, who's going to defeat death once and for all.

And so, we're going to see this even greater blood, greater than the blood of a lamb, that provides an even greater covering. God's judgment is going to pass over us as well, if we're covered by Jesus' blood.

And so, Jesus takes this meal, this meal that was meant to strengthen God's people in the Old Testament, meant to strengthen Israel, and he uses it to strengthen his people, his disciples, in a greater and new way here in this passage.

And so, we're going to jump right in and see what it is that Jesus does. We're going to look first at Christ's sacrifice, and then at Christ's feast. First at Christ's sacrifice, and then at Christ's feast. First is sacrifice in verses 22 through 24. When the Jews celebrated Passover, there would be this liturgy, this formula that they would follow each time.

[7 : 56] And the head of the household, the patriarch, would be the one who would lead that. He would ask certain questions, and they would respond with certain answers. He would give explanations of different pieces of the meal, and he would recount the history of God's faithfulness to his people as they were leaving Egypt.

Jesus here serves as the patriarch of this meal. Jesus is the head of the household. You may remember from last week, the disciples asked this interesting question, where are we going to prepare for you, Jesus, to have the Passover?

And so, Jesus is the one who is serving them and leading them here, which helps us understand what he does in this meal, because he either adds to that traditional question and explanation, or he replaces it.

The passage actually doesn't tell us. It doesn't tell us whether Jesus is adding new things in addition to the explanation of the Passover, or if he's just replacing it entirely. But what Jesus says here helps us understand what he means this meal to do.

He is putting new words into an old liturgy. Verse 22, our understanding is that the bread here would normally be eaten in silence. Jesus then breaks the silence with this very simple explanation, take, this is my body.

[9 : 17] Now, he doesn't tell them anything more than that. Many folks think here, at the very least, the broken bread reminds them of Jesus' broken body. In fact, this sense, it doesn't remind them, it foreshadows it.

This is my body that belongs to you. What's going to happen to it for your sake? It's going to be broken. I am going to die. So he's foreshadowing his death, but he's also telling them something else.

It's not just that the bread is broken. He says, this bread is my body. There is a sense in which his presence is there with him. And so when we celebrate the Lord's Supper together as a church, we say there is a sense in which Christ is with us spiritually.

It's his body, right? We're not saying that he literally becomes the bread or the bread literally becomes him, but what we are saying is that he associates himself so closely with that element, so closely with that bread that we know he is with us in a way that is greater than he's normally with us. He is giving them not just his body, but his presence. They're feeding on him in a sense. And so the bread speaks to a couple things. It speaks to Jesus' death for them.

[10 : 33] It speaks to his continuing presence with them. He doesn't just tell them about the bread, though. He also, verse 24, helps explain the wine.

He says, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Jesus is alluding here. He's quoting Exodus chapter 24, verse 8, when Moses takes blood from animal sacrifices and he sprinkles them on the people.

He says, salvation was previously shown. It was previously imaged by the blood of animals. Jesus here is saying, everything those sacrifices pointed towards is now here. Salvation is now shown by my blood.

It's no longer shown by the blood of animals. It is shown by the blood of Christ. He doesn't just tell them it's blood, though. It's blood of the covenant. Now, even if you've been in Presbyterian circles for a while and you've heard the word covenant repeated over and over, if I asked you, if I put you on the spot and I said, tell me what a covenant is, I imagine a few of you would be able to give me this, like, great, precise theological answer, right?

[11 : 50] And most of us would probably think, ah, it's like a Bible word. I'm not sure what it means. I just know we say it a lot. So, for your sake and for my sake, I've given you a definition on the back of your worship guide.

What is a covenant? A covenant is a stunning blend of both law and love. It is a relationship much more intimate and loving than a mere legal contract could create, yet one more enduring and binding than personal affection alone could make.

It is a bond of love made more intimate and solid because it is legal. It is the very opposite of a consumer-vendor relationship in which the connection is maintained only if it serves both parties' self-interest.

A covenant, by contrast, is a solemn, permanent, whole self-giving of two parties to each other. More intimate than a contract, more enduring and binding than personal affection.

Now, if you got lost in this definition, the point is this. God's covenant with his people is his commitment to them, which is founded on his love.

[13 : 04] God is saying, look, my salvation, Jesus is saying, my salvation is imaged by this blood to which all the sacrifice is pointed forward. And I am intimately and deeply connected and committed to you.

And that is not founded on your behavior, but on my sacrifice. We have a relationship. In other words, it's not simply, not merely that Christ dies for our sins and we receive forgiveness, but we also enter into a relationship with him that is an unbreakable covenant.

Verse 24 then clarifies that, which is poured out for many. This blood pays the price of the sins of God's people.

That's the many. The many are the ones who have faith and follow after Jesus Christ. That reminds us, by the way, of Jesus' words in Mark chapter 10, for even the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Now, I've told you a little bit about what the bread and the wine mean. We could continue to talk for hours about this. There have been books that have been written just on this topic.

[14:27] What I want you to know is this. Jesus is telling them they will draw life from his death. Jesus says, take this as my body.

This is my blood, which is poured out for many. He is saying, just as you receive life and nourishment from physical food, you are going to receive life and nourishment from me. That is what all the sacrifices pointed towards. My body and my blood, it's going to feed you. It's going to cover you.

It's going to account for the forgiveness of your sins. It's going to give you life. It's going to establish a relationship between you and me.

That relationship is going to be more binding than a mere contract, more affectionate than a contract, more binding than a mere relationship.

[15:34] And so the command that Jesus gives his disciples in verse 22 is also an invitation.

As they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it, he broke it and gave it to them and said, take, this is my body. That's the invitation of the Christian faith.

Will you feed on Jesus Christ? Will you allow his death to bring you life?

Will you allow his blood to cover your sins? Will you follow him as someone who's in a covenant relationship?

Will you take and eat? Is Jesus' death your life? That is the question that Jesus asks everyone.

[16:40] So we see two things here. There's a ransom. The ransom of Jesus paying the penalty for his people's sin, and there's a presence that Christ is with us. It's with his disciples in this meal.

He associates himself so closely with that meal that we can say spiritually he's present there with us, and he's established a covenant with us. That's what's true, Christian, for you, if you follow after him, if you have faith in him.

There's a true story that's told of a nine-year-old boy whose name was Mark, and Mark was in the third grade, and he had this project, this creative writing project that his teacher gave him about the grasshopper and the ant.

The teacher gave them this prompt, and they said, look, here's what happened. There was an ant, and the ant worked hard all summer storing up food. That was its main thing. It was just working, working, working.

The grasshopper, on the other hand, just played all summer. Grasshopper stored up no food. And then the winter came, and the grasshopper has no food.

[17:46] The ant has food. The grasshopper goes to the ant to ask for food. Now, it's your job, third grader, to finish the story. Tell us what happened with the ant and the grasshopper. Well, this teacher had taught it many times and knew there's only two ways that these students would write the answer to this question.

Some students would write it out this way. The ant said no, and the grasshopper died. And then the other set of students would write it out this way.

The ant was kind and shared with the grasshopper, and they both lived. Mark did a different story, though, that she'd never seen before. Mark said, what I'm going to do is tell a story this way.

The grasshopper said, yes, you can have all my food. Then the grasshopper died. And at the bottom of his page, Mark decided to draw three crosses.

The Lord's Supper says, we live because of Jesus' death. We feed on him because he died.

[18:58] His death is where we draw life. Is that true of you? We don't just see Christ's sacrifice, though, in this meal.

We also see Christ's feast. Now, you might be thinking about the feast that he's having with the disciples here in this moment, but he actually talks about a different feast.

Verse 25, after he's talked about the wine, he says this, truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

And so it's not just that he meets our physical hunger as a sign of how he meets our spiritual hunger. It's not just that Jesus gives us new life.

It's also that he presents us with a new future. I mentioned earlier the different things that would happen during the Passover meal. And our understanding is that there would be four glasses of wine that would happen throughout the meal.

[20 : 04] There would be two cups of wine before the bread, two cups of wine after the bread. So if you're keeping track here, Jesus, when he presents the cup to his disciples, it's the cup after the bread, which means we're on cup three out of four.

After he served cup three, Jesus says, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. In other words, Jesus ends the Passover meal early and he does not drink the last cup of wine.

Each cup of wine meant something different. The last cup was the cup of consummation. Meaning that the last cup looked forward to when all things would be made right.

There is a sense in which the Passover meal that Jesus had with his disciples has not ended yet because he never drank the fourth cup.

In other words, Jesus is saying, there is an even greater feast that is coming. There is going to be a time when the kingdom of God is here in full, when God's people are fully in his presence, when we experience the wedding feast of the lamb that Revelation 19 talks about, that we look forward to and long for when every tear is wiped away and all wrongs are set right.

[21 : 40] Jesus is telling them not just that they draw life from his death, but that they have a future to long for and look forward to. He is going to feast with them again when they drink the fourth cup.

When we are with him and the kingdom comes not in part, but in full. Verse 25 clarifies what kind of wine.

He says he's going to drink new wine. Meaning here that there's going to be an even greater quality to this meal, to this place, to this time than we can understand or imagine.

And so as Jesus is in the last week of his life, as he's made incredible preparations to make sure his arrest doesn't happen yet, as he's arranging things so he can have this final time with his disciples to instruct them and encourage them and guide them.

He makes sure they know two things. His life, his death, is going to be their life. And he's going to have a party with them in the future.

[23 : 02] How does Jesus feeding his disciples strengthen us? Strengthens us in the same ways. We draw life from his death. We look forward to his return.

That's what we're going to sing about in our closing hymn. We're going to say this. We will feast in the house of Zion. We will sing with our hearts restored. He has done great things.

We will say together. We will feast and weep no more. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your sacrifice and not just your sacrifice.

but for your presence, your reminder, your teaching. We ask that these things would become clearer and clearer not just to our minds but to our hearts. That we would know that we feed on you, that we draw life from you.

We would look forward to the feast that is to come. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[24 : 12] Amen.