

The Last Supper

Opening Prayer:

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me....
Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me out of my distress.
Consider my affliction and my trouble,
and forgive all my sins. (Psalm 25:1-2, 16-18)

Scripture Reading:

Mark 14:12-25

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"

"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

Video Presentation – Session 1 “The Last Supper”

Key Insights:

- ✓ Jesus specifically chose Peter and John to prepare the Passover meal.
- ✓ It is thought that the site of the upper room where Jesus shared his last meal with his disciples is the same room where 120 disciples gathered on the Day of Pentecost to witness the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Though no one knows for certain, the room may have been the place where the disciples fled after Jesus was crucified
- ✓ The Last Supper was likely eaten around a *triclinium*. Reconstructing the seating of the group around a triclinium, we see that Jesus would have been flanked on his right by John and on his left by Judas Iscariot.
- ✓ The Passover meal is intended to make the vital story of Israel’s deliverance accessible to all those around the table.

Questions for Discussion:

- 1) How would you feel if Jesus selected you to prepare the Passover meal for him?
- 2) What do you think about Judas Iscariot being seated right beside Jesus at the table and already determined to betray him? What does that say to you about the risks of Christian discipleship?
- 3) In what way does your participation in the ritual of Holy Communion help you to recall your own experiences of deliverance?
- 4) Talk about a time when you truly felt that sharing the Lord’s Supper was both profoundly sacred and deeply joyful.

Book Discussion:

The story of the betrayal winds its way through the rest of the Gospel accounts of the final twenty-four hours of Jesus’ life. Before the night was through, Judas would betray Jesus; Peter would deny him; and the disciples would desert him, leaving Jesus utterly alone as he faced trial at the hands of his enemies.

The echoes of Jesus’ prediction and of the acts of betrayal by those closest to Jesus are still discomfiting. In our own age, when church leaders have abused children, embezzled funds, and more, we realize that such betrayals are commonplace. Jesus might well have said, “All of you will betray me”; and that realization, we must look finally at ourselves. (pg. 22)

- In what ways have you been betrayed by someone close to you?
- How do you see yourself when you approach the altar to take Communion? What do you remember of the story of Jesus when you eat the bread and take the cup?
- In what way does your participation in the regular ritual of the Eucharist meal help you recall your own experiences of deliverance?

The Last Supper was meant to be repeated in commemoration of the new covenant, just as the Passover Seder was meant to commemorate the central sign of God's saving act in the Hebrew Bible. This meal, this new Passover, the Eucharist or Holy Communion, would be a perpetual reminder of God's love, his grace, and the sacrifice of his Son. It would be the meal by which we as Christians would remember our story. By means of it, our lives would be reshaped. *(pg. 26)*

- How would you say the observance of Holy Communion defines or shapes who you are?

In the hours before Jesus would be arrested, tried, and held for crucifixion, he was with twelve men who were his companions and intimates, men with whom he had prayed, worshiped, and shared life. When he went to pray, knowing he would die, he asked those who were closest to him to pray with him.

Remember, these close companions were not perfect. They had let him down and would do so again. One would even betray him. Still, they were the best friends he had; and they were with him as he approached his darkest hour. *(pg. 27-28)*

- If you were sitting down to what you knew to be your last meal, whom would you want sitting around the table with you?

Wrapping Up:

Imagine you are reclining at a table in the dimly lit room. Take in your surroundings. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? How does the food taste? Are you near enough to touch anyone? If so, whom?

Closing Prayer:

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen *(Romans 15:5-6)*

For Further Study

Bible Study and Discussion

Exodus 12:21-28

- What should you say to your children when they ask what the Lord's Supper means?

Jeremiah 31:31-34

- What are the implications of being bound to God by a covenant inscribed inwardly on our hearts rather than on stone tablets?

John 15:12-17

- What does it mean to accept the bread and the cup during Communion not only as Jesus' disciples, but as his friends?

1 Corinthians 11:23-32

- Why did Paul Consider it so crucial that partakers of the Lord's Supper "examine themselves first? To what extent do we do that today?