

“Take Part” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Maundy Thursday – April 6, 2023

- I. **1 Corinthians 11:26** – ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.
- II. **Tonight brings us together to think about the rescue plan of God.**
 - a. It goes back to the Exodus from Egypt and the final plague that was about to come down on the Pharaoh... the death of all the firstborn.
 - i. We’ve been studying this in our adult Bible study on Sundays... as God used 10 plagues against the hard-hearted Pharaoh to force him to release the Hebrew people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt.
 - ii. The final plague was the death of the first born of all the land – even the firstborn of the Pharaoh himself.
 - iii. God forewarned the Hebrew people through Moses, His servant, that they could be passed over from this deadly plague if they took certain measures... followed a specific set of instructions...
 - iv. So the Lord told them to get ready to go... get your house in order because you will be on the way out of Egypt in no time at all.
 - v. The instructions included eating a last meal that reminded them of the difficulties of slavery... but also a spotless or perfect lamb was to be sacrificed and its blood would cover the frame of each front door.
 - vi. The blood of the lamb would be a sign for the Lord that His judgment would pass over that house. (Exodus 12:12-13)
 - vii. Sure enough, God’s judgment passed over those people who had the blood of the lamb covering the entry to their homes.
 - b. In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus is walking in the desert and John the Baptist sees Him and says, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)
 - i. Clearly, John the Baptist sees Jesus as the THE Lamb, or the single source of bringing forgiveness to the world.
 - ii. The Lamb, or Jesus Christ, goes back to the Passover meal in the Exodus account, and His blood would have God’s judgment pass over the person who receives Him through faith.
 - c. So we come to the Last Supper, as Jesus gathers His disciples in the upper room for one, final meal together before God’s ultimate rescue plan is carried out.
 - i. They came together because Jesus always followed God’s instructions perfectly, and one of those commands was to gather each year and celebrate the Passover meal (Exodus 12:14-20)
 - ii. Also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover was a seven day feast that began with removing all the leavening, or yeast from the home... and ended with the meal that included a lamb without blemish or spot.

- iii. This is the scene or the setting in which we find Jesus and His disciples on that fateful night... reflecting upon the way that God had delivered the Hebrews out of Egypt by passing over them with His judgment of death and destruction... and freeing them from bondage.
 - d. For nearly 1500 years, the Jews had kept the statute of God to remember the Passover by doing exactly what God said – using things like bitter herbs, root vegetables, flat bread with no leavening, and wine.
 - i. They participated in this meal to remember the deliverance from Egypt... their current connection with God has claimed them as His people... and to look forward to the day of Redemption.
 - ii. In other words, they take part in the past, present, and future rescue plan of God.
 - iii. So here Jesus sits with His disciples, and He takes the unleavened bread, breaks it, gives it to them and says to eat this... My body... and then takes the wine, gives it to them and says to drink this... My blood.
 - iv. The Exodus story of God's redemption by passing over His chosen people with destruction and judgment would be fulfilled in His Son.
 - 1. A final Passover Meal would be necessary – and no more.
 - 2. Jesus would go from that meal to the Garden of Gethsemane... betrayed by sinful men... and within hours be arrested, tortured, tried and sentenced to death.
 - 3. The Lamb of God would be sacrificed on a cross – His body broken... His blood shed... so that judgment and destruction would pass over all who are chosen by grace through faith.

III. **It is within this context that St. Paul writes to the Corinthian Church.**

- a. These new Christians were casual and thoughtless about the Lord's Supper... even getting drunk and not sharing with the poor.
- b. It seems that in the early Church, a communal meal was often shared with Lord's Supper after that, which was a sign of fellowship and connection.
 - i. The Corinthians were using this time to divide the rich and poor – and even get drunk – a terrible abuse of the most wonderful gift.
 - ii. So Paul clears up some problems, explaining the serious nature of the Lord's Supper and taking it means that we confess our sins and desire to do better, and we have faith in Jesus who is in the bread and wine.
- c. Even today we need reminding of the importance of the Lord's Supper – as we may be taking it without reverence... not confessing our sins and repenting... not discerning the body and blood – and the Body of Christ that comes together in this most holy meal.
- d. But the gift is here – the gift is God's strength and power to keep going even as we struggle against our sinful lives – the gift is given weekly.

- e. Paul even goes a step further and says that whenever you come to this meal... you proclaim the Lord's death (His sacrifice on the cross) until He returns in glory.
 - i. Just as the pastor proclaims the salvation story from the pulpit each week, the people who attend communion also proclaim this story!
 - ii. Your attendance at the Lord's Supper is a living sermon – a way you show your inward faith in an outward deed – especially that Jesus really did die and rise again for you.
 - iii. And not only that, but the strength we receive from the meal helps us love God and love our neighbor, another outward sign of our faith in Jesus Christ and His gift of redemption.

IV. **So, take part in the salvation story with awe and wonder.**

- a. Take part in the past – the redemption of God throughout history for His chosen people
- b. Take part in the present – the forgiveness of sins that comes in the blessed sacrament of His body and blood – for a present-day strength to continue
- c. Take part in the future – the completion of the story that brings us to the marriage feast of the Lamb – the ultimate celebration of eternal life in our glorified and resurrected bodies....Amen.