

“The Eternal Passover” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Maundy Thursday March 28, 2024

- I. **Luke 22:14** – “And [Jesus] said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’”
- II. **Six weeks ago, we observed Ash Wednesday.**
 - a. It was Valentine’s Day this year, and we came together to receive ashes on our foreheads, remembering our sinful condition.
 - i. We are dust, and to dust we shall return was the phrase we heard...
 - ii. The beginning of Lent puts us in a place of humility as we prepare for this week... Holy Week.
 - iii. The reading for Ash Wednesday was about preparing for the Passover Meal, and how Jesus was prepared to go the way of the cross to save us from our sins.
 - iv. Tonight, we come full circle as we return to the Passover Meal, but not the regular Passover, because Jesus wanted to give a new gift to His followers.
 - b. We’ve talked about the evil that wants to overcome us, but in the face of that evil, we trust our God and the plan that He carried out in Jesus.
 - i. The theme this Lent has been, “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.”
 - ii. Time and time again, we see satan, the world, and even our own sinful nature taking part in evil, but God is still able to work these things out for good... and tonight is definitely good.
 - c. This evening’s service is kind of a break in the action – before the arrest... before the beatings and mocking... before the death of Jesus, we have an amazing gift.
 - i. We might think it’s a night to be sad, but it’s a night of quiet joy... full of wonder... a time to marvel at what Jesus gave to His apostles, but also to us... even as we gather tonight.
 - ii. The Passover was transformed on that night to become an eternal gift that is so much more than just reminiscing, but a participation in the very grace of God!
 - d. Jesus said to them that night, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”
 - i. Earnestly desired means that Jesus really, really wanted to share this meal with them.
 - ii. He was looking forward this meal because He knew that it was going to bring together the past, the present, and even the future of God’s saving grace.
 - iii. That’s why it can be considered an eternal Passover, because it will always mean something in the way God saves us.
- III. **The Passover was celebrated every year by the Jewish people.**

- a. The first Passover was in Egypt more than 1400 years before Jesus.
 - i. It was the night when the last plague would fall on Pharaoh and the Egyptians for not letting God’s people go from slavery... and all the firstborn would die.
 - ii. Yet, God told Moses and the people to sacrifice a lamb, putting its blood on the outside of their homes on the lintel and doorposts... and death would pass over that home.
 - iii. The meal was eaten with a sense of urgency because God said that they should be ready to go from that place – freed from the bondage of slavery.
 - iv. The last plague worked, and Pharaoh finally let them go.
- b. You would think that the gift of freedom and the deliverance that God provided for His chosen people would be enough for them to trust in Him.
 - i. Unfortunately, evil followed them and came out of them wherever they went.
 - ii. The covenants and laws that God made with them and for them were always broken, and nothing could make things right again... except God Himself.
 - iii. This Passover meal would be the answer to the brokenness and evil that would forever separate us from God.
- c. In a way, we can say that evening, and the hours that followed were the turning point in all human history.
 - i. Jesus begins that turning point in history with the old ritual that the disciples had probably known their entire lives.
 - ii. He takes a cup that is part of the old ceremony, and He blesses it and asks them to divide it among themselves...
 - iii. Jesus then gives them something new—really new.
 - 1. “This bread is My body which is given for you. As you have remembered deliverance from long ago, now you will have a new deliverance to remember. Do this in remembrance of Me.”
 - 2. Then He says, “This cup being poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood, through My death.”
 - 3. This was all new and different from any Passover meal ever... the old Passover meal was no longer the same.
- d. I often say that the Lord’s Supper, which Jesus started, or instituted on that night, is a gift that strengthens and encourages us as Christians.
 - i. It is not just something that happened a long time ago that we “remember” or “reminisce” about... but a gift of God’s true presence and grace in our Lord’s Supper... right here, right now.
 - ii. We come to the table of God’s grace as humble, struggling sinners... as those who are impacted by evil in every way... every day.

IV. **The weight of sin and evil are enormous.**

- a. It starts with our own sins of thought, word, and deed.

- i. Yes, even after years of following our God through the wilderness, we still fail to trust in Him above all things.
- ii. We are tempted to believe that the things of this world can save us... can heal us... yet the only true healing comes with our Savior and His sacrifice for our sins.
- iii. As we trust more and more in worldly things, the distance from God grows – not that He doesn't pursue us – but we slowly set Him aside and go our own way.
 - 1. Going our own way includes selfishness, fear, harming the people around us, and even harming ourselves with poor choices.
- b. Yet, the sins we struggle with are not always of our own making.
 - i. Sometimes we face a sinful world that includes illnesses of every type, accidents, wars, crime, and financial troubles.
 - ii. The burdens of this sin in our world can be so heavy... and often we can do nothing to change the outcome.
- c. In all this trouble, Jesus says to us, "I really want to spend time with you in this Supper... as I give you forgiveness, life, and salvation."

V. **Jesus is our sacrificial lamb.**

- a. Jesus became the very Lamb of God who was sacrificed so that by His blood we can be free from the slavery of sin...
- b. As He sat with His disciples, earnestly seeking to give them a new covenant in His blood, He knew that we would benefit as well.
- c. Forevermore, this meal would be a gift that would free us from every sin and even the power of satan and death.
- d. As we come to the Lord's Supper tonight, or any time it is offered, He is with us in a real and tangible way.
 - i. The bread is His body... the wine is His blood... given for us... given for you.
 - ii. The Lord's Supper is an encounter with the Living God – the God of the universe... and your Savior in a very personal way.
 - iii. Never come to the Table of our Lord believing it is just bread and wine alone – or just a symbol or a remembrance – because God wants us to participate in this gift of His true body and blood as He delivers His grace.
- e. In this Meal, God strengthens us under the burden and weight of sin and evil.
 - i. We cannot truly change our hearts and minds to repent of our sins without God's grace.
 - ii. We cannot face the trials of life and the temptations and challenges of sin, death, and satan without God's grace.

- iii. We need the Lord's Supper... we need God's grace and forgiveness found in the Lord's Supper because it is one of the most real ways we can encounter God.
- f. Jesus earnestly desires that you come to His Supper to be healed, to be freed from sin, to overcome evil... and to receive the grace that He won for us on the cross. Amen.¹

¹ Sermon based on: "You Meant It for Evil, but God Meant It for Good: An Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday Sermon Series Based on the Gospel of Luke", Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs, Concordia Seminary Publishing, St. Louis, 2022