

Sermon outline and notes:

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Mark 14:12-26 “The Last Supper”

Intro. This morning we continue to look at the significant events that took place during our Lord’s last day before His death on the cross. It was to be a night and day of intense suffering for our Lord. But this morning we will see why our Lord Jesus was willing to go through such suffering and death. But before He began His intense suffering, He wanted to have a final moment of fellowship with His twelve disciples. They would gather around the table in an upper room for the Passover, & His Last Supper.

Now before we partake of the Lord’s Supper together, let us look into Mark’s account, and prepare our hearts for this important memorial meal. I hope you will learn something new about the Lord’s Supper, or at least be reminded about some important truths before you partake of the elements.

Now consider with me first of all:

I. THE EVENT OF OUR LORD’S LAST SUPPER

We will not fully understand the meaning of the Lord’s Supper if we do not understand the event it was associated with. V.12 says, “Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb...” Likewise, vv. 14 & 16 also mention the Passover. So let’s consider what happened at the Passover celebration. Notice with me:

A. Passover Required Preparation – Certain things had to be taken care of in order for the Lord to enjoy this last Supper with His disciples at Passover. First:

1. The Lord Directed Them to the Place – The Lord constantly had to borrow places & things, and He needed to borrow a place where He could have the Passover meal with His 12 apostles. No doubt He wanted to be alone with these disciples, and enjoy some undisturbed fellowship. And knowing what was in Judas’ heart, He did not want to tip Judas off in advance where they would meet that evening. So in v.13 the Lord gives 2 disciples a somewhat unusual sign to help them know where they were to prepare the meal. They were to look for a man carrying a pitcher of water, & follow him. Usually, only women and older girls did this.

Sure enough, what Christ predicted came true. As they went out, they saw something unusual: a man carrying a water pot! They followed him to what was probably a large house, and asked for the owner.¹ Then in v.14 see what they were to say to him, “The Teacher says, ‘Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’” It seems likely that owner was a follower of Christ. Perhaps it was the home of John Mark’s father. As a believer, he was ready to give up even the chamber which he had prepared for his own family’s celebration of the feast, as implied in v.15.

¹ Greek: *oikodespotes*, literally “lord of the house.” See how the word is used in Matthew 13:27; 20:1; 21:33; Luke 13:25.

Are we ready to surrender our cherished possessions for His use? Will we use our houses to minister to others for Christ? Will we use our cars to visit for Him? Will we give our tithe to support His work?²

So after the Lord directed them to the place, we see that:

2. The Two Disciples Made Preparations – Notice in the last of v.16 that “they prepared the Passover.” Peter and John (Luke 22:8) had to take the Passover Lamb to the temple for it to be sacrificed that afternoon. They also probably had to purchase unleavened bread, bitter herbs, wine, etc. Then the lamb had to be roasted for the Passover meal.

Even so, we have to make preparations for the Lord’s Supper. Our Communion Committee prepares & sets out the elements. They cover the table. And each person should prepare their heart for a proper observance of the Lord’s Supper.

B. Passover Had Meaning – When God instituted the Passover, He said that their children would say to you, “What do you mean by this [Passover] service?” (Ex. 12:26). Well, what does it mean? They were to remember that the blood of the slain lamb was applied to the doorposts in Egypt to keep the angel of death from slaying their first-born. The unleavened bread was to remind them of their haste in leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:39), and the bitter herbs spoke of their suffering as Pharaoh’s slaves. At sometime in the centuries that followed, the Jews had added to the ceremony the drinking of four cups of wine diluted with water.³ Prayers of thanksgiving were spoken with each cup. In addition to thanking God for the fruit of the earth, they would thank God for their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

I hope you can see how the Passover provided a fitting transition to the Lord’s Supper. Today, we will remember that the true Lamb of God was slain, & His blood shed on a cross, that we might be saved from death. After all, we all have sinned (Rom. 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). But Christ died in our place, just as the lamb died in place of the firstborn. We also should give thanks that Christ has provided deliverance from the bondage of sin.

How can we know that Jesus was the fulfillment of Passover? How can we know that Jesus was the true Lamb of God? Well notice something else about this particular Passover:

C. This Passover Was of Supreme Significance – As we see in vv.1-2, the Jewish leaders specifically said they would not arrest & kill Jesus during the upcoming Passover feast. However, by God’s providential appointment, our Lord was crucified at Passover, the very time when thousands of Passover lambs were slain! So this providential occurrence was meant to draw attention of the Jewish nation to Christ as the true Lamb of God. It was meant to bring to their minds the true object and purpose of His death. It would be strange indeed if such a remarkable death as His, at such a time, did not set many minds thinking and open many eyes.

Do you believe that Jesus was the Lamb of God, who died for the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29)? I do. He was the fulfillment of what Passover was about.

So let’s move from the event of the Last Supper, to:

² Another application is the fact that the Lord promises to lead His people (Rom. 8:14).

³ The Four Cups of wine used in the Passover symbolize the four distinct redemptions promised by God to the Hebrews as told in Exodus 6:6-7. (1) "I will take you out of Egypt", (2) "I will deliver you from Egyptian slavery", (3) "I will redeem you with a demonstration of my power", and (4) "I will acquire you as a nation".

II. THE EXAMINATION OF THE LAST SUPPER

This is implied in the context of vv.17-21. Judas was with the 12 at this particular time. Jesus warned that one of the disciples would betray Him. Then each disciple started examining their hearts to see if they could do such a thing. Each asked, "Is it I?" This must be the basis of why Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 11:28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

So whenever we observe the Lord's Supper, we should examine ourselves before we eat or drink. Now what are the spiritual issues that you should examine? First, we should ask:

A. "Am I truly a Christian?" - Judas was not, and Jesus did not institute this memorial supper until after he had left. So we may conclude that only Christians are to partake of the Lord's Supper. Besides, eating the Lord's Supper will not do a bit of good if you are not a Christian. Partaking of the Lord's Supper will not make you right with God. Faith in Christ is the one and only way to be right with God. There is no evidence in Scripture that the Lord's Supper has sacramental value. In other words, the Lord's Supper is not a converting or justifying ordinance, and those who come to it unconverted and unjustified will go away no better than they came. Why you could go to one of those churches that serves communion every Sunday, and take it weekly, but if you are not yet a Christian, eating bread & drinking wine from the Lord's Table isn't going to make you one. If you eat dog food, does that make you a dog? Of course not! Likewise, eating this bread, & drinking from the cup of the Lord's Table isn't going to make you a Christian either.

So are you truly a Christian? Or are you still dead in sin and worldliness? If you are, then you have no business partaking of the Lord's Supper. What you need to do first is repent of your sins, trust Christ as your Savior, and be born again. You can be saved today. Then, and not till then, we are fit to partake from the Lord's Table.

Parents, you have a responsibility to enforce this teaching. Until your children profess Christ as Savior, are baptized, and show evidence of conversion, that should not partake, and you should not let them!

B. "Am I living in obedience to my Lord? Do I have any sin that I have not confessed and forsaken?" If you are living in willful, ongoing sin, you should not partake unless you are willing to confess & forsake that sin as you prepare to partake. Examine your heart. Have you been faithful to the Lord, or have you betrayed Him by willful & persistent sin?

Now I'm not saying you have to be living a sinless life before you partake. The disciples were far from perfect that night they ate with the Lord. I'm just saying that you should confess & forsake known sin before you partake. The Bible does not say we have to be worthy to partake. It just says we are not to partake in an unworthy *manner* (1 Corinthians 11:27, 29).

Here's another question we should ask as we examine ourselves:

C. "Do I have a right relationship with others?" Based on what Jesus said in Matthew 5:23-24, you cannot have a right relationship to God if you are wrong in your relationship to others. Ask yourself, "Is there anyone I need to forgive? Is there anyone I need to seek forgiveness from? Do I need to seek reconciliation with someone?"

The Scripture seems to suggest that you should not partake of these elements without self-examination, and unless you have made yourself right with God by confession and faith in the forgiveness of Christ. On the other hand, we are not to be content with staying away from the

Lord's Table under the vague plea of unfitness. He commands us to remember Him by means of this memorial supper. If we don't, we are living in sin.

So let us examine ourselves, and correct anything that is not right. Then, let us come to the Table in obedience to our Lord.

Now when we come to the Table, let us consider next of all:

III. THE ELEMENTS OF THE LAST SUPPER

This is somewhat different from the Passover. In the Passover observance, they partook of roasted lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8-20), and the cup. But when the Lord institutes the Lord's Supper, He only gives the bread, & the fruit of the vine.⁴ That's because the Lord was replacing an Old Covenant ordinance with a New Covenant ordinance. A few more hours and the old symbol, the blood of a lamb, will have served its purpose forever, having reached its fulfillment in the blood shed on Calvary. It was time, therefore, that a new symbol replace the old. Bitter herbs are not taken in the Lord's Supper, because Christ has removed the bitterness of the bondage of sin! We do not serve lamb at this table, because Christ fulfilled what the lamb was all about.

So our Lord focuses our attention upon just two elements: the bread and the fruit of the vine. In v.22 Mark reports, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'" Then v.23 says, "Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it." Now let's consider first of all:

A. The Symbolism of the Elements – Just as the Passover lamb pointed to Jesus, the true Lamb of God, even so, the bread & the fruit of the vine were symbolic, pointing to Jesus. So when Jesus passed out the bread & said in v.22, "Take, eat; this is My body," He was not saying that the bread literally turned into human flesh. When He passed the cup & said in v.24, "This is My blood...", He was not saying that the cup was suddenly filled with His literal blood. To interpret these words of our Lord that way is to ignore several facts. First, His literal body was standing before them. Secondly, our Lord frequently used symbolic language. For example, in Mark 8:15 Jesus said, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." He wasn't warning of literal leaven. I could give other examples.⁵ In each of these cases the context makes it clear that those who interpreted Christ's words literally were mistaken! Of course, the bread points to our Lord's body. And the Cup reminds us of our Lord's blood.

Now, what are the basic lessons that we should draw from the symbolism of these elements?

1. The elements of the Lord's Supper remind us of Christ's sacrifice for us. The bread is intended to remind us of the "body" of Christ. He suffered in His body. In Isaiah 53 the prophet predicted that He would be "wounded for our transgressions... And by His stripes we are healed." Remember His wounds. Remember the stripes on His back. The dark red wine is intended to remind us of the "blood" of Christ, which was shed to save us from sin & death.

⁴ By speaking of "the fruit of the vine" Jesus undoubtedly refers to wine. At this time of year (March/April) and under conditions then prevailing in Judea, it is hard to think of anything but fermented grape juice, typically diluted with water.

⁵ John 2:19; 3:3; 4:14, 32; 6:51, 53-56; 11:11.

What a claim regarding the unique significance and power of His death! Think of any mere teacher or prophet making the claim that his shed blood would bring the forgiveness of sin! Christ's view of His death is written unmistakably on the Lord's Supper. He is the true "Passover Lamb," whose shed and sprinkled blood establishes new relations between God and the "many" who truly partake of that sacrifice. The keywords of Judaism—"sacrifice," "covenant," "sprinkling with blood"—are taken over into Christianity. The false doctrine which some teach, that His death was nothing more than the death of a very holy man who left us an example of how to die, is contrary to the clear meaning of this ordinance, and cannot possibly be reconciled with our Lord's words at its institution.

2. The Element of the Cup Points to a New Covenant – Jesus said in v.24, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many." The word translated "covenant" comes from the Hebrew word that means "to cut." All biblical covenants were ratified with blood. The Old Covenant was ratified with the blood of animal sacrifices. That covenant said, "Obey God's law, & you will live." However, that covenant failed to produce life, because of man's sinful nature. So God gave a prophecy of a New Covenant through Jeremiah the prophet. As Jesus looks into the cup, He sees a symbol of blood. He announces that the New Covenant was about to be ratified by His blood. And what does God promise to all who enter into this New Covenant? Well, by faith in the shed blood of Jesus on the cross, God promises not to remember our sins. He will forgive them.

Have you entered into this new covenant with God? God will do His part of the agreement if you will do your part, which is to repent of your sins, and place your faith in the shed blood of Jesus, the Savior.

3. The Elements Point to Our Dependence upon Christ for Daily Living - Our Lord commands us to "eat" bread and to "drink" from the cup. The object of eating and drinking is to be strengthened and refreshed. The conclusion we are meant to draw is clearly that the Lord's Supper is appointed for "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls." The Lord's Supper is a visible symbol of the Christian life, which should not only be lived in remembrance of Him, but consists in partaking of His life by faith, and incorporating it in ours, until we come to the measure of perfect men, when we can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

How do you live each day? Do you live relying upon your own strength? Or do you live each day trusting in the Lord's enabling grace? That same night Jesus said in John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." You can't live the Christian life on your own. You need to trust in Jesus each and every day.

Now as we consider the elements of the Lord's Supper, let us also reflect upon:

B. The Proper Reception of the Elements - The benefit of the Lord's Supper depends entirely on the spirit and frame of mind in which we receive it. The bread which we eat, and the cup from which we drink, have no power to do good to our souls, without the cooperation of our hearts and wills. We are not to go to the Lord's Table as a mere form, and without thought. So after we have examined ourselves, what should we do as we partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper?

1. Partake with Remembrance of Our Lord - Mark's account is the briefest of the three, and omits the word of our Lord, "Do this in remembrance of Me." But it is found in Luke's account (Luke 22:19). So it was the desire of our Lord that by means of the supper, the church should remember what He did for us, & why He did it. We should reflect on His sacrifice by faith.

2. We Ought to Partake with Gratitude & Love – Notice in v.23 that “He had given thanks” for the cup. The bread and wine will remind us how great our debt to Christ is. We are not only thankful for the nourishment the Lord provides each day, but most of all, we thank Him for the forgiveness of our sins. May these be the feelings that we experience whenever we receive the Lord’s Supper!

Finally, there is one more topic to cover from this account of the Lord’s Supper, and that is:

IV. THE EXPECTANCY OF THE LAST SUPPER

I say that because Jesus said in v.25, “Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” Though Jesus spoke of dying & shedding His blood very soon, He also spoke of a future kingdom. As He faced the darkest day of His life, Jesus offered His disciples hope of a better day. So by implication, notice with me two of our Lord’s promises that we should remember and anticipate as we partake of the Lord’s Supper. First of all:

A. Our Lord Promised a Coming Kingdom – In Luke’s account we know that earlier that evening, Jesus said, “And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom...” (Luke 22:29-30). Clearly, He was not talking about a present spiritual kingdom in the hearts of believers. He was talking about a future kingdom, when Jesus will reign over the whole earth. There believers, in our glorified, resurrected bodies, will feast forever in the company of our Lord, and praise Him & thank Him forevermore. We see, therefore, that communion not only points back to what Jesus Christ has done for us, but also forward to what He is *going* to do for us.

So our Lord pictures for us a grand royal table. He is seated at the table as King, and His people are also seated at the royal table with Him. Are you going to be there in that coming Kingdom? There is only one way to be there, and that is by putting your faith in Jesus, and making Him your King by repentance of sin.

Now since Jesus has promised us a Kingdom, He has made another promise:

B. Our Lord Promised to Come Again – It is not until He comes again that “the kingdom of God” will be fully established on earth. Then, and not till then, we shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. When the apostle Paul taught about the Lord’s Supper, he also pointed out this future aspect of the Supper. He said in 1 Corinthians 11:26, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” Jesus is coming again. He is coming to save His people, and judge the world.

Suppose this Thanksgiving that you have a son who is off to Afghanistan to serve his country. As you gather around the table, do you think for a moment that you are going to forget all about him? No. You will remember him in prayer. You will talk about what he has said in his recent letters. You would talk about how you long for his safe return. But imagine the joy you would experience if he unexpectedly arrived home just as you were about to have your Thanksgiving meal? You hear the doorbell ring. You go to the door, and there he is!

Conclusion: Well, our Lord Jesus has asked us to remember Him. As we gather around the table in just a moment to do that, let us do so with hopeful anticipation of His return. When the trumpet sounds signaling His return, will your heart rejoice, or will your heart be filled with fear, because

you are not yet a Christian? Well, you can be ready for His return. You can be seated with Him at the royal table in the Kingdom of God. When I give the invitation in just a moment, come forward. I will lead you in a prayer to repent of your sins, and place your faith in Jesus. Then you will enter into the New Covenant promise. All of your sins will be forgiven!

I also call upon believers to do what our Lord asks of us. Remember Him. Examine your lives. Confess your sins. Be thankful for what Jesus has done for you.⁶

Sources: Ronald A. Beers, ed., *Life Application Study Bible* (Tyndale House & Zondervan, 1991); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). McGee read, but nothing added.

Also read sources from parallel accounts: Mt. 26:17-30; Luke 22:7-23.

⁶ Note that our Lord concluded the Lord's Supper in the same way the Jews concluded the Passover Supper. Since, the Lord's Supper was the natural outgrowth of the Passover; it is probable that the hymns of praise that were lifted up to God were Psa. 115-118. These are songs of praise, thanksgiving, and trust. Imagine our Lord singing when the cross was only a few hours away!