

## **Reflecting on God's Word**

Reading: Mark 14:12-26 (NT page 1020)

12 On the first day of the Festival 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?"

13 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. <sup>14</sup> 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?' <sup>15</sup> He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

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

17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup> While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"

20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup> 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."

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

23 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

24 "This is my blood of the <sup>[a]</sup> covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. <sup>25</sup> "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

26 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Reader: John Campbell

**MP 544**

**Open my eyes that I may see**

**Sermon**

"Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him."

Our reading tonight again tells us of another world that we have to grasp in order to understand,

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, or Passover, was established to commemorate the historical deliverance from Egypt. It was one of the three annual festivals, and was observed on the fourteenth day of the first month Nisan (March/ April) to the 21st. For 7 days unleavened bread was eaten and no regular work would have been done. On the first and the last day sacrifices were offered to God. The word pesach that means turn away, is the origin of the Greek word pascha. The unleavened bread had to remind them of their hurried exodus – there was not even time for the bread dough to rise before it was baked!

It was also on the first day that all the Representatives from each family would have the priests slaughter a lamb for them in the temple, then return with it to feed the whole family that night. They would have burnt the blood and the fat and only the meat was allowed to be eaten. Unleavened bread, bitter herbs and spices reminded them of the suffering they suffered in Egypt.

In our reading Jesus sends two disciples to go into Jerusalem to find a room for them to celebrate the Passover. In Biblical times you always needed just two witnesses to convict or condemn you in a court of law. But then Jesus says they must follow a "man carrying a jar of water".

I am sure most of you will now think, how on earth are they going to spot a man carrying a jar of water in a crowd of thousands...all celebrating the important Jewish Passover?

But the thing is it would have been very easy for them because no man in that society would ever have carried a jar of water. It was solely the task of woman or slaves.

And then they must follow him until he enters a house. At that house they must say to its owner that the teachers want to know where his guestroom is where He can celebrate Passover with his disciples. He will then show them the upper room. Anyone with a two-story house, the second story containing a "large" upper room, would be considered

well-to-do. This family presumably resided in the area of Jerusalem known as the Upper City, near the temple, rather than the poorer Lower City.

Jesus follows the practice of the usual feast but changes it – giving it new meaning. First he says something very shocking at the very beginning of the meal namely that someone will betray him. They were shocked because in their society something like this never happened. Why? Well you invited only those who were your friends or who had the same honor that you had. But Jesus did not reveal who it would be. He allows the suspense to hang in the air.

The head of the household customarily gave thanks for the bread and wine before any meal, but special blessings were said over bread and wine at the Passover meal.

Covenants were usually ratified by the blood of sacrifice - God had redeemed his people from Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb. Passover ritual interpreted the cup but did not interpret it as blood, because Jewish law and custom were revolted by the idea of drinking any creature's blood—especially human blood. But again Jesus gives this new meaning. His blood will be the total sacrifice for the sins of his people.

After the meal, it was customary to sing psalms from the Hallel, which consisted of Psalms 113–118. The walk to the Mount of Olives took at least fifteen minutes.

I think it would have been quite clear to Jesus' disciples that this Passover meal was different in so many ways. I am sure they must have thought what was going on and what was going to happen next?

But for us living after the crucifixion and looking back into the events we can indeed see a pattern.

Jesus practiced what He preached. He came and showed God's plan for humanity. A plan which included rather than excluded. His love was meant for everyone – the strange man who carried the water jar, and the rich man who provided a room for His last supper. He even had His enemy at his table. Although He knew that someone would betray Him, He did not expose Judas at this occasion.

And He gave them and us the hope of inheriting the eternal kingdom of God through the new covenant that was sealed by his blood.

And ever since the last supper of Jesus, believers came together and remembered what Jesus did a long time ago. But remembering is a strange thing. It can play havoc at times and totally ignore reality and often "memories" can also be very selective. The same can happen to us when we remember Jesus and what he has done. The only way we can keep our "memories" real is when we live and act in the way Jesus showed us.

It reminds me of a story I read about a man who had to make a sculpture of a horse out of a marble block. One of his friends came to him and said: It must be very hard task to undertake! The artist then answered. Actually it is very easy. I just take off the parts that does not look like a horse!

In the same way must we take away all the things in our lives that does not look like the example of Jesus. Yes you and I are sometimes the only ones to show the world through our actions who Jesus was.

And tonight we are invited once again to His table of inclusive love. Love that will not let us go – not even for one second. And we are all welcome, the sinners, those who are strange according to society, the rich and the poor – yes even the Judasses, which is actually you and me in most cases!

May God help us to show the world that we indeed remember Jesus through our actions of love, forgiveness and mercy!

Amen