**THE LORD’S SUPPER**

December 1, 2013

Mark 14:12-26

Key Verse 14:24 “‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,’ he said to them.”

Today’s passage is titled, “The Lord’s Supper.” Accordingly, we will have communion after the worship service, so prepare your heart through this passage. Just as the Israelites had a clear answer to the question, “What does this ceremony mean to you?” when they were celebrating the Passover, we should also have a clear answer. Why did Jesus institute communion? What does this ceremony add to Christianity? Paul said it best in 1 Corinthians 11:26, “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, it is a proclamation and embracing of what Christ has done for us. We do not literally eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Lord when we take communion; however, it is a sober reminder of the love of Christ for mankind. Symbolically, we should be partakers of his sufferings and self-sacrifice, willing to take up our crosses and follow him.

**First**, The Passover is fulfilled in Jesus. Look at verse 12. “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?’” Why did the Israelites celebrate the Passover every year? There are two answers. The first is that it was meant to remind the people to look back on their past, the second is that it was meant to look forward to the coming of the Christ, our Passover lamb. Let us start by looking back, way back to the first Passover. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and God sent Moses to deliver them. God brought 10 plagues upon Egypt. The Passover occurred during the final plague, the one which set the Israelites free. At that time, each Jewish family slaughtered a lamb, put some of the blood on the doorframe, and then ate the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. That same night, as they ate the Passover meal, God passed through Egypt, and struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon: there was not a house without someone dead. But he passed over every house that had the blood on the door posts. (Ex 12) So God instituted the annual Passover as a time to look back on the mighty events that had resulted in the birth of their nation. He said, “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD--a lasting ordinance.” (Ex 12:14).

But ultimately, the Passover was meant to look forward to its final fulfillment in Jesus. Therefore, we do not eat the Passover anymore, but 1 Corinthians 5:7 proclaims, “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” The blood of the first Passover lamb delivered the Israelites from physical slavery. The blood of Jesus, the true Passover lamb, sets us free from slavery to sin. The blood of the first Passover lamb saved the Israelites from judgment for one night, but later most of them fell under God’s judgment anyway and died in the desert. But the blood of Jesus sets us free of judgment forever. Think about the word: “Passover.” This word does not say, “you will escape judgment because I find you worthy.” It says, “you will escape judgment because I pass over you.” Only Jesus can be the Passover lamb, because only the blood of Jesus, if applied to the door post of our heart, has the power to atone for our sin, so that God will pass-over us in his judgment on the last day.

**Second**, Jesus’ love and Judas’ betrayal. Look at verses 17,18. “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.’” Jesus was eating the Passover with his disciples. At this time he called them “friends” (John 15:15). And he showed them the full extent of his love by washing their feet before this meal. (John 13) He dipped his bread into the bowl with them. There is so much love of Jesus here. And yet one of them rejected his love and would betray him for money. Betrayal is the most hurtful wound, because it is done by the one we trust and love. Jesus trusted Judas with the money bag. Jesus showed him love by washing his feet, and by offering him the piece of bread. Judas repaid Jesus evil for good. Psalm 41:9 predicts Judas’ painful betrayal, “Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.” It was an unpleasant issue. It was painful for Jesus and it made the disciples sad. But Jesus had to address it. In John 13:19, he explains why, “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.”

Look at the disciple’s response to Jesus’ prediction. Look at verse 19. One by one they said to him, “Surely not I?” One by one means each one. There is no doubt that Judas said it also, because Mark says so. For the eleven, their statement shows their shakiness, but it also shows their honest hearts, and willingness to search their hearts. When told that one would betray Jesus, they did not point fingers, but looked into their own hearts, to see if it was them. Whether this was their thinking or not, it is how we should take Jesus’ words, with personal application and heart searching. But for the twelfth disciple, Judas, this statement was the opposite: a hiding of the heart. Judas had already agreed to betray Jesus and had set the price. But he lied and said, “Surely not I?” He was a great actor. He had fooled all of the disciples; none of them suspected him. But did he think he could fool God? Well he could not.

How could Judas reject Jesus’ love? Continually, for three years Jesus reached out to him, but he would not listen. He pretended to follow Jesus, but actually he had his own agenda, perhaps to profit from his position. It is easy to say he was predestined--his fate was set, but this did not free him of responsibility. Look at Jesus’ final warning to him. Look at verse 21. “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.” When Judas refused to listen to rebuke and repent of his evil plan, Satan entered him. Later he regretted his action. The small money he gained for his betrayal, was like blood in his hands, so he threw it away. But he did not repent. He could not repent. His heart was as hard as a diamond. He could not live with himself, and he refused to repent and be forgiven, so he hung himself, instead. Now he is in hell. It would have been better for him if he had not been born.

**Third**, the blood of the covenant. Look at verse 22. “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.’” In Luke 22:19, it reads, “And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’” Therefore, Jesus not only offered this bread to his disciples, but to us too. So we are to do this in remembrance of him. The bread symbolizes Jesus’ body, broken on the cross, twisted and disfigured beyond that of a man (Isa 52:14). And yet his bones were not broken. He is the Passover lamb. When Jesus was giving bread, he was giving his life because he loved us. He found us worthy to make us holy children of God. The communion is the time to see how unworthy we are and yet being made worthy through Christ because of his love. In John 6:54-56, Jesus proclaimed, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” By eating Jesus’ body, we are proclaiming his death until he comes (1Cor 11:26). We affirm that we believe in his death and its power to forgive our sins. We proclaim that we have eaten his Word, the Word that became flesh. So Christ is in us and we belong to Christ.

The meaning of the blood of Jesus is perhaps even more wonderful. Look at verses 23,24. “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.” The wine in the cup symbolized Jesus’ blood. He said, “this is my blood of the covenant.” What does it mean? “Covenant” means “contract.” It is a contract between God and man. Sin is not free of charge. It demands payment. It does not demand money; it demands only blood. So in the Old Testament, God made a contract with the people of Israel that if they sacrificed animals and offered the blood, God would forgive their sins. But it was imperfect. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

But Jesus established the new covenant in his blood. Hebrews 9:15 says, “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” Jesus shed his precious blood on the cross to give us the forgiveness of sins. The purpose of forgiveness of sins is that we can have life, eternal life. The power of sin is the power of death. Young people do not think about death. Yet they are all under the power of death. How? Young people are afraid that their lives will end up in mediocre or even failure. This fear drives them to do many stupid things or makes them despair. Some of our students are struggling in their studies. Their fear is that their lives will end up in failure without doing anything great. It is the power of death. They need to drink the blood of Jesus.

As you know, blood is the source of life. It is nourishment, provision, and support for every member of the body. If any member of the body does not get blood, it withers and dies. If your little finger, toe, or leg does not get blood to it, it will wither and die. The life flow of the blood keeps the body going and doing what it needs to do. Therefore, when we drink the cup, we are not only symbolically drinking to remember that our sins are forgiven, we are also symbolically drinking the life, nourishment, and provision that God provides. When we drink the blood of Jesus, we are saying that God abundantly supplies all of our needs, even eternal life in heaven.

Furthermore Jesus’ blood has the power to heal and protect us. Whenever a virus attacks our physical body and begins to make us sick, our blood begins to fight with white blood cells. When the enemy of your soul rises up against you, the blood of Jesus covers us like a shield and protects us from the enemy. Many times we suffer from different kind of attacks upon our spirit: A careless word that was said that cuts like a knife into the heart; A selfish act that almost destroys you emotionally; An attack from Satan upon your thought life of condemnation. This is when the blood of Jesus wraps around our spirit to protect and bring healing to the hurts of our lives. Not only so, Jesus’ blood has the power to deliver us from the bondage of sin and free us. Whatever Satan has wrapped around your life and seems to be choking the very life out of you, the blood of Christ can break and set you free.

Most of all, our future is secure forever in the kingdom of God as his holy children. That is how Jesus overcame the power of death. Look at verse 25. “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.” Jesus’ vision was fixed on the kingdom of God. Humanly speaking, this seems impossible. In just a few hours he would be betrayed and condemned to death. But when Jesus knew the clear meaning of his suffering and death, he had hope. He could see his resurrection. He could see his ascension into heaven and sitting at God’s right hand until everything was put under his feet. He could see the victory of God’s kingdom. Jesus planted this hope in his disciples. Those who have a blood covenant with Jesus can have heavenly vision all the time. They can be victorious all the time. So Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before going out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus was not marching out to humiliation, but to victory that would last forever. Jesus shares this glorious victory with his new covenant people.

Let’s eat the flesh of Jesus and drink his blood every day so that we can have his life in us and live as new covenant people by his blood.