**THE NEW COVENANT IN JESUS’ BLOOD**

March 31, 2019

Matthew 26:6-35

Key Verses 26:26b-28 “‘Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’”

In today’s passage Jesus instituted communion, also known as the Lord’s supper. We will have communion, 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. What does communion mean? 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 of the new covenant Jesus made with his blood. It was now Thursday night. Jesus would die as the Passover Lamb for the sin of the world in a few hours. In this situation, if he had been an ordinary man, he could not have been mindful of anyone. But Jesus accepted one woman’s pouring perfume on him and honored it as the anointing for his burial. Let’s learn the meaning of communion, especially the meaning of the new covenant in Jesus’ blood.

**First**, Jesus is our Passover Lamb. Look at verse 17. “On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?’” What is the Passover? The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for 400 years, 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, 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. But ultimately, the Passover was meant to look forward to its final fulfillment in Jesus. 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**, a woman of heart (6-13). Look at verses 6-7. “While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.” This woman listened carefully to Jesus when he said that he would die the next day at this Passover (2). So she took the most precious thing she had and gave it to Jesus. According to Mark 14:5, her perfume was worth a year’s wages. But it did not matter to her because she loved Jesus more than anything. Look at verses 8-9. “When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. ‘Why this waste?’ they asked. ‘This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.’” To the disciples’ common sense, the woman was so wasteful that they were angry at her. They said, “What a waste!” The more they calculated the cost of the perfume, the more upset they became. They said, “This money could have been used for the poor,” and so on. What did Jesus say to them? Look at verses 10,12. “Aware of this, Jesus said to them, ‘Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me…When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.” Jesus regarded her pouring perfume on him as an act of love. Jesus credited her pouring perfume as the anointing for his burial. Jesus also said that it is an event to be remembered forever in world salvation history. Verse 13 reads, “Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

**Third**, a smart man, Judas Iscariot (14-16). Then one of the Twelve--the one called Judas Iscariot--went to the chief priests and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” After receiving thirty silver coins, 120 days’ wages, Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. Why did Judas betray Jesus? When he first followed Jesus, he was very excited. He thought that Jesus would establish the Messianic Kingdom on earth and he would be a cabinet member. Now it became clear to him that Jesus would die soon. It seemed that 3 years of following Jesus was a big waste. Then suddenly, the world looked very dark. He was overwhelmed by fear, fear of future security. When he was caught by fear, he was beside himself. Then the devil came into his heart through his groundless fear. He began to be driven by the power of the devil. In his helplessness, he was looking for a way to get out of the situation. So he went to the religious leaders and made a terrible deal. Jesus had revealed to him personally that he was the Son of God. Jesus had taught him the hope of the kingdom of God. But Judas never accepted Jesus’ teachings from his heart. He remained as a smart and godless man. But Jesus loved Judas to the end. He wanted to give Judas one more opportunity to repent. Look at verse 21. “And while they were eating, he said, ‘Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.’” It was terribly hard for Jesus to talk about betrayal at the Passover meal. Yet Jesus could not but say this so that he might lead Judas to repentance. 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, but Jesus had to address it. At this, the disciples were very sad and began to say to him one by one, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?” Look at Jesus’ final warning to Judas in verse 24. “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 rock. 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.

**Fourth**, the blood of the new covenant (26-30). Look at verse 26. “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’” Just as bread nourishes our physical bodies, so Jesus nourishes our souls. In John’s gospel Jesus explained, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty…Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you…for my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink” (Jn 6:35,53,55). We human beings constantly seek something that can satisfy our deepest longing. But nothing in this world can satisfy us, be it money, human love, pleasure, success, achievements or fame. Only Jesus can give us true satisfaction, that comes through his divine peace and love.

Look at verses 27-28. “Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” In these simple statements, Jesus is ending the old covenant. The old covenant is conditional and hinges on man’s obligation. It is characterized by God’s words, “You shall…you shall not.” To violate even one law one time made one a covenant breaker. There is no mercy, only justice. On the other hand, the new covenant of grace is based solely on God’s faithfulness to keep his promise and stems from his unconditional love for mankind. It is characterized by God’s words, “I will…I will….” It is God’s one-sided promise of blessing. Hebrews 8:8-12 says, “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant…This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel…I will put my laws in their minds…I will be their God, and they will be my people…For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

No one could keep the old covenant due to our sinful nature. It only exposed the sinfulness of fallen people. It exposed that we deserve to be punished for our sins according to God’s justice and righteousness. But God had mercy on us and made a new covenant. Jesus fulfilled this new covenant completely on the cross and said, “It is finished” (Jn 19:30). Jesus paid it all. He forgives all our sins and enables us to come to God freely. God removes our sins as far as the east is from the west and remembers them no more (Ps 103:12; Heb 8:12). Even though God remembers our sins no more, we remember our sins, and suffer from guilt and condemnation. But we should believe that God has forgiven all our sins and remembers them no more and put our trust in him. Then we can enjoy the blessings of the new covenant. That is why the author of Hebrews encourages us “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” (Heb 10:22)

Another important characteristic of the new covenant is that it is sealed by Jesus’ blood, while the old covenant was sealed by the blood of animals. When the priest stood knee-deep in the blood of thousands upon thousands upon thousands of lambs, it was a way of reminding them all of the cost of God’s reconciliation to man, that it cost bloodshed, sacrifice. Hebrews 9:22 says “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.” A covenant with God always demanded not just death, but blood-shedding because life is in the blood. And the pouring out of the blood was a very graphic, a very painful, a very vivid demonstration of the loss of life. And so, Jesus died to save us from our sin. But it wouldn’t be just enough for him to die. In his death he poured out blood through the wounds in his hands, the wounds in his feet, the wound in his side, the thorn marks in his head. Blood running everywhere to demonstrate that life was flowing out of him graphically and visibly, that he was offering himself as a blood-shedding sacrifice for sin.

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; Satan’s condemnation due to guilt. 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. Whenever 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 29. “I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom.” 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.

As we celebrate communion today, let’s remember Jesus’ sacrifice shedding his blood to cleanse us from our sins. Let’s live as new covenant people in victory, looking forward to eat with Jesus in his kingdom.