

Text: Mark 14:12, 22-26

Title: "This is My Blood / The Supper"

Introduction: We believe historically that Jesus lived somewhere around 30-35 years. The time period we have recorded according to the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) were approximately the last 3 years of His life. All 4 of those books of Good News or the ministry of Jesus drive toward 1 thing ... the day of His crucifixion! We believe that this 24-hour period changed the world!

Beginning Thursday evening and on through Friday afternoon, Jesus would eat the Last Supper with His disciples; pray in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives; be betrayed and deserted by his closest friends; be arrested and convicted of blasphemy by the religious leaders; be tried and sentenced by the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate; be beaten and tortured by Roman Soldiers and suffer ridicule, crucifixion, death and burial.

The suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the reason you and I sit here today. If Jesus had lived and taught those three years, and just retired and gone fishing, we would not know the name 'Jesus' (unless the History Channel did a series on popular teachers of 1st Century Palestine). If Jesus would have been tortured and crucified and there had not been a resurrection; same thing ... we would not be here! BUT, Jesus was crucified, he died and was buried. The third day, he was alive again.

If we don't know the events of those last 24 hours of Jesus' life, I challenge that it's hard for us to know who we are as Christians! We need to know what Jesus went through that day, why He went through it and how it happened. I believe that we can learn a lot about who we are as followers of Jesus Christ if we know the last events of Jesus' life. Throughout this series we are going to find out how those hours apply to our lives here in 2010.

Before we get into those last 24 hours before Jesus died on a cross, we have to have some background: In the weeks/months before the His death, Jesus has told His disciples numerous times that He must go up to Jerusalem and that he is going to die and that He is going to come back to life. We find this in all four Gospel stories of Jesus.

The week of the Passover Feast (all religious Jews went to Jerusalem for this feast), Jesus and His disciples arrived in Jerusalem. We call it Palm Sunday, because Jesus entered the city to waving palm branches, coats laid on the road in front of the donkey he rode and shouts of 'Hosanna'! The people love Jesus for his healing touch and great teachings and advice. They think that Jesus just might be the Messiah ... the One promised by the Old Testament as the One who God would send to liberate the Jews! The expectation is that the Messiah will be a political/military leader who will bring the Jewish nation up to Superpower status (get rid of Roman Empire and other enemies).

So, at the beginning of the week (Sunday), many Jewish people are excited about Jesus being in Jerusalem. That deteriorated fairly quickly ... the next day Jesus turned over the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple. With the Temple priests getting a cut on all sales in the Temple, they were not happy about Jesus reminding them that they had turned God's house into a house filled with robbers. The Jewish religious leaders were, needless to say, not happy.

This continued throughout the week as Jesus confronted the Jewish leaders with Scripture and made them look foolish. Then the Jewish leaders tried to trap Jesus to make Him look foolish and it backfired (“Oh, Great God!”). Finally, they quit asking Jesus questions, and instead start looking for reasons to arrest Jesus so they can get rid of Him.

Jesus knows that they are trying to figure out ways to arrest Jesus and the disciples know it too. Now, they kind of go into hiding...

This last week of Jesus’ life, he spent the nights in Bethany (suburb of Jerusalem just across the Mt. of Olives) and his days in the Temple area in Jerusalem (MAP?). Now, the disciples know that essentially, they are in hiding.

I. Prepare the Passover

- A. On Thursday of that week was the beginning of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This Festival would last through the Sabbath and on Sunday people would begin travel back to their hometowns...
 1. Festival of Unleavened Bread was the celebration of the liberation of the Jews from 400 years of slavery in Egypt.
 2. It commemorates the mass exit of hundreds of thousands of Jews out of Egypt after God, through Moses, broke the heart of Egypt’s Pharaoh and allowed the Jews to leave.
 3. There were 10 plagues that God brought against Egypt for them to understand that the God of the Jews was the One True God.
 4. The last plague was the last straw for Pharaoh ... in Exodus 12, we hear Pharaoh tell Moses and Aaron to “Get Out!” and take your people and your livestock with you...
 5. The Hebrew/Jewish people had to evacuate so fast that their bread dough did not have a chance to be leavened (yeast/rise) and so they took with them “Unleavened Bread” and left Egypt!
 6. Ever since, as commanded by God, the people spent 7 days without eating “leavened” / yeasted bread.
- B. The Last Plague was the reason for the Festival ... the last plague was the death of the firstborn male child in every household in Egypt.
 1. BUT, God had warned the Hebrew people through Moses that their firstborn could be saved.
 2. How? The households were told by God that they needed to sacrifice a lamb and brush the blood of the lamb over their door frames ... when God saw the blood; He would Pass Over that household and spare the life of those living there.
 3. After Pharaoh found out that every household in Egypt had death in it, including his own, he set the Hebrew people free!
 4. Thus, the Passover Meal celebration!
- C. This is the Meal that Jesus and his disciples needed to prepare for that Thursday night.
- D. (V. 12) Again, Jesus and his disciples are probably in Bethany, but they know that the Passover Meal has to be celebrated within the walls

of Jerusalem... Now, some say that Jesus just knew what was going to happen to make arrangements for the Passover Meal and others say that Jesus had made arrangements ahead of time for the disciples...

1. Here's what Jesus tells the disciples (two of them ... Peter and John?): (V. 13-16) A couple of things to be aware of here:
 - a. *One*: women carried water in jars, not men. Men carried wineskins ... it was a signal!
 - b. *Two*: "The Teacher asks..." = The house owner had to be a follower of Jesus. Previous arrangement!
 - c. *Three*: If Jesus was in as much trouble as he was ... and he was! They would have to be very secretive in setting up where Jesus would be on this night! AND, the owner of the house that Jesus spent that evening in was risking his own life by taking Jesus and his disciples in!
 - d. *Four*: Homeowner was probably pretty well off financially to have that large a room available in Jerusalem proper.
 2. Preparation = around 3pm the two disciples would have to have a lamb sacrificed at the Temple in order to fix that lamb for the evening meal ... no small task!
- E. Later in the evening, Jesus arrived with the other disciples and they began the Passover Meal / Seder. This would have been a great celebration for the Jews (Jesus and his disciples = all Jewish!) as they remembered through the food of the meal how God had come through for their ancestors in Egypt:
1. Bitter herbs = bitterness experienced as slaves in Egypt.
 2. Herbs dipped in saltwater = tears shed during those 400 years.
 3. Charoset = apple puree that looked like mud mortar used to make bricks and build in Egypt.
 4. Egg = new birth and new life of being freed to a new life.
 5. Unleavened bread = reminder of the haste in which the Hebrew people had to leave Egypt.
 6. Lamb = lamb slain for blood over doors (Passover).
 7. Cups of wine to remind the Jews of God's 4 promises to the people in Egypt (Exodus 6:6-8).

II. Preparing Ourselves

- A. This meal of celebration would have lasted around 4 hours as the courses came out, there would have been feelings of great joy as the disciples remembered how God has set His people free from slavery!
- B. Jesus changed the tone of the meal though, when he said, "One of you will betray me!"
 1. Jesus knew which one, but he did not say.
 2. The rest of the disciples stated, "Surely, it is not me?!"
 3. Jesus = "the one of the twelve dipping in the same bowl as me" ... bread dipped in the charoset.

- C. That night would be a string of betrayals ... Judas betrays, Peter denies, other disciples desert Jesus. Jesus is left alone to face the trials, pain and death.
 - 1. When have you been Judas?
 - 2. When have you been Peter?
 - 3. When have you run away like the other disciples?
- D. I believe this needs to be part of our Communion Experience ... search ourselves for ways we have denied, betrayed or left Jesus and ask for forgiveness. Note that even though Jesus knew what his disciples would do, he washed each of their feet (John).
- E. This needs to be part of our communion every time too ... Repentance from the times that we've denied, betrayed or run away from Jesus.
- F. Historically, Lent was the period of the year that Christians would do whatever it took to repent if they had denied Jesus to avoid persecution or execution for their faith. This is the time of year to REPENT / TURN from how we have treated Christ and TURN toward Jesus and STAND for Him!

III. **The Last Supper**

- A. Now, remember that that night with His disciples is where Jesus turned this meal into something for Christians and away from what the Jews do in Seder/Passover. When Jesus spoke next, he changed how Christians are to think when it comes to food...
 - 1. (Vs. 22) Jesus took the Unleavened Bread (not raised), broke it, which was normal; BUT, instead of talking about the Jewish people escaping slavery in Egypt, Jesus spoke of His Body being Broken! By Jesus broken body (FORGIVENESS), we are going to be set free from our slavery to SIN!
 - 2. (Vs. 23-24) Jesus then, according to Mark, took the cup and thanked God for it (the way they always did) and they all drank from it (the way they always did).
 - 3. Then, Jesus said something they had not heard before ... normally, this is where it would be talked about how God had promised the Hebrew/Jewish people freedom from slavery and a Promised Land.
 - 4. Jesus, instead, talked about a NEW COVENANT -- a new arrangement between God and God's people (not equal ... God's plan and up to us to agree) – that this wine now represented Jesus' blood, and by Jesus' blood, we would all have our sins (as a sacrifice for many) be paid for ... cost of sin is death ... Jesus here picks up the tab. We can be forgiven because of Jesus blood shed on the cross (now there is a PROMISE)!
- B. This is where Jesus changed the Jewish Passover/Seder Meal into Holy Communion / Eucharist (to give thanks)...

IV. The Good News Meal

- A. See, the Israelites had become God's people through the blood of animals, but now Christians were going to become God's people through the blood of Jesus Christ. The Jews were set free by God through the blood of a sacrificial lamb spread on the door frames. Now, we, as followers of Christ are set free by the blood of Jesus! It's a NEW DAY!
- B. So, what is it that defines who you are? Is it a memory that is repeated over and over in your head of something someone has done to you or said about you? Is it abuse that you suffered as a child? A put-down spoken by someone you trust that still hurts? A habit or addiction that still controls you?
- C. Do you know what Jesus did on that night? Jesus made you part of a bigger story! Do you know what defines you? A God that loves YOU so much that even though He knows what we are capable of (denial, betrayal and desertion), still sent His Only Son to die on a cross ... WHY? Because God Almighty, the "Oh, Great God", wants more than anything to be in a relationship/partnership with YOU!
- D. The Good News is that God cares way more about *your* future than your past! God took care of your past that night at the declaration of the NEW COVENANT = If you will ask forgiveness, IT'S YOURS!
- E. When we come to this table, it's not as people who DESERVE TO! WE don't DESERVE this MEAL, We NEED this MEAL! WE NEED GOD'S GRACE (getting what we certainly don't deserve!) and FORGIVENESS and that's what is being offered!
- F. This is Eucharist, a chance to REPENT of who we are (deserters, deniers, and betrayers) and thank God for the New Covenant where we GET TO agree with God's terms... Forgiveness through Jesus' Blood!

V. Band of Brothers

- A. One of my favorite movies is "A Band of Brothers" about E Company of the 101st Airborne in WWII in Europe. These men who went into combat together, jumped out of airplanes into enemy fire and lived in foxholes together just yards from the enemy; became deeply committed to each other. They risked their lives for each other.
- B. When we talk about "COMMUNION", that's what we are talking about. We are in this together.
 1. Together we come back to the table of bread and wine, remembering that we are in this "Together".
 2. Together, we come knowing that each and every one of us needs the forgiveness offered by Jesus!
 3. Not one of us can judge anyone else in this room, because we ALL come as sinners ... we ALL NEED Jesus to die on that cross!

4. If any one of us thinks that we are better than another here, you are not approaching Jesus with the right heart ... if you think that you are better than anyone here, then please stay in your seat!
 5. This is communion ... a community ... a Band of Brothers coming together before Jesus for FORGIVENESS for our denial, desertion and betrayal of Jesus Christ.
 6. And, then, as a Band of Brothers, we walk out of here FORGIVEN and ready to CHANGE THE WORLD FOR GOOD!
 7. If we are going to go into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth with this GOOD NEWS, then we Need Each Other. We have to have each other's backs, headed in the same direction ... not cutting each other down and fighting amongst ourselves...
- C. Today, please come to the table in a different way ... come with a humble heart, as one who NEEDS Jesus to Die on that Cross and not one who thinks he/she DESERVES Jesus to Die on that Cross.
- D. By God's Grace...

Communion: (Vs. 22-24) Please come with Humble Hearts, ready to receive God's Grace ... we ALL NEED IT!

Let's Pray!