

Jesus is the Lamb

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[0 : 0 0] Our scripture this morning is from the book of Mark, chapter 14. Mark, chapter 14.

Now, we've been looking. We've been going through the book of Mark since the beginning, but for the last few weeks, we've been looking at the last week of Jesus' life. And now that we get to Mark 14, we're going to read about Thursday night.

This is what we're going to read happened on Thursday night, the same night that Jesus is going to be arrested. And by the next afternoon, he will be hanging on a cross.

We're in the very last hours of Jesus' life. Excuse me. The last hours of Jesus' life here. So we're going to read chapter 14, starting at verse 12, going to verse 25.

And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples said to him, Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?

[1 : 0 5] And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. And wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, The teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

And he will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. There prepare for us. And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it, just as he has told them, and they prepared the Passover.

And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.

They began to be sorrowful, and to say to him one after another, Is it I? He said to them, It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me.

For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.

[2 : 0 9] And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to them, and said, Take, this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank of it.

And he said to them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it in the new, until I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Amen. This is God's word. So we, we've, we've, I've had the Lord's Supper on my mind a lot this week, because of this passage.

And one of the reasons that I love the Lord's Supper is, is the memories. A really simple reason, but I think about all of the Lord's Suppers that I've been a part of since I was a little boy, participating in.

And I remember them so, and so many of them so well. And part of the reason I think they were memorable is because my family used to sit on the front row, and people used to come forward for communion at my church.

[3 : 17] And so it was the one chance that you had to see who was sitting on the back row, and to see everybody in the congregation come forward. And so for me, the Lord's Supper, if nothing else, and the Lord's Supper is so much more than this, but, but, but it evokes memories for me.

And if you're someone who was raised in the church, and you did communion every month, like we did at my church growing up, and like we do here, by the time you're in your mid eighties, there's, there's a good chance that you will have sat through a thousand Lord's Suppers.

And that's a lot of memories. And of course, that's not the center of the Lord's Supper. It's not just about the memories of the people you're with. It means a lot more than that. But every time, isn't it true?

Every time you come to the table, you can't help but think of the memories. And when you think about it, oftentimes those memories are sweet. And I bring that up because what we just read about was the first Lord's Supper.

And so in one sense, there are no memories here. This is a new thing, and it must've hit the disciples really hard, for instance, for Jesus to look at the bread and the wine and to say, this is my body and this is my blood.

[4 : 25] How shocking that must've been the first time. But at the same time, the way that Jesus explains the Lord's Supper and the way that he explains his death is actually by appealing to the disciples' memories.

He uses memories to tell his disciples what's going on here. And it's because they're gathered there for a reason, and they're gathered there because of memory in a sense.

We read at the beginning of the passage, the reason that they came together for this meal is because they were celebrating the Passover. And the Passover was something that these disciples would have known about and would have rehearsed every year that they were growing up since they were little boys.

So they would have had memories, memories of this meal, not just to the people they were with, but memories of what it meant. What does the Passover mean? And the center of the Passover meal was the lamb.

The lamb was the most important part of the meal. And every disciple would have known the significance of the lamb because it's something that you would have rehearsed every year when you celebrated the Passover meal, how God used the lamb to save all of his people thousands of years ago.

[5 : 38] And Jesus, when he comes to this first Lord's Supper, he uses all those memories of the Passover to make a new claim. And his new claim is that he is, in fact, the lamb, that Jesus is, he's the true Passover lamb.

Paul says it in 1 Corinthians. He says, Jesus is our Passover lamb. And what I want to do this morning is just two things. Number one, say, what does that mean? What does that even mean for Jesus to stand up and say that he is the lamb?

And then number two, to ask the question, who is this lamb for? Who is the lamb for? So first, what does it mean? Why does Jesus, what does it mean for him to suggest that he's the lamb?

And what you have to know about the Passover is that the Passover meal was not just, it wasn't just food. It wasn't like Thanksgiving where you just eat and eat and eat. It was a reenactment. So there was, you can almost call it, there was pageantry here.

And it was, they retold the story of the Passover. And the Passover is something that many of you know well. It's the story of God saving his people out of Egypt.

[6 : 45] And you remember how God sent Moses to tell Pharaoh, let the people go. And Pharaoh kept saying, no, no, no. And the more Pharaoh said no, the more plagues God sent on Egypt.

He was bringing judgment on Egypt until he put enough pressure that God, that Moses would let the people go. Excuse me, I'm getting all these words wrong this morning. Put enough pressure so that Pharaoh would let the people go.

And God, when Pharaoh doesn't let go, when Pharaoh doesn't stop, there's this final plague. And God tells Moses, I'm going to bring one last plague down on this land.

I'm going to bring judgment on Egypt. And after this plague, Pharaoh will let the people go. And the way that he does it is he says, Moses, I'm going to save my people with a lamb.

And the significance is this, that Moses was told to tell all God's people, go to your houses, get with enough people in your house so that there's enough people in your house to eat a whole lamb.

[7 : 58] And what they were told to do was to sacrifice a lamb, put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of the house, and then go inside and eat the lamb. And there were some other things that he told them to eat like unleavened bread.

And what would happen is when God's judgment came down on Egypt, all of the firstborn, that judgment would go into all the homes in all of Egypt and take the life of every firstborn that it could find, both human and animal.

But whenever that judgment came to the house where there was blood on the door sill of the house, it would pass over that house.

And that's why the celebration is called the Passover, because when God saw the blood of the lamb, he passed over the house and didn't bring judgment into that room.

That's why it's called the Passover. And so if you think about it, that's what happened. But what does the lamb mean in that situation? What is the significance of the lamb? The lamb was a substitute.

[9 : 05] So instead of taking the life of a firstborn, the life of the lamb was sufficient. And so the lamb's life was a substitute for the life of the firstborn.

Because the lamb died, the firstborn could live and could escape Egypt. Now that story, the Passover story, that is the story. That story was the most important story, I would argue, in all of the Old Testament.

You know, we put so much emphasis in founding stories. So we retell over and over again the story of how our nation was founded. And we talk about George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, these people.

Founding stories matter, and it tells you who you are. And this was the founding story of God's people in the Old Testament. Because just after this, he's going to take them out into the wilderness and he's going to make them into a nation where before they were just a family.

You know, I think if a Jew in the Old Testament, if you could have told them, you can carry one story with you into the future, what story will you carry? They would say the Passover.

[10 : 13] Because that was when God made us into a people. And it was the one great story of redemption in the Old Testament, even though there were many. And so here's Jesus. He sits down with his disciples.

They're celebrating the Passover. They're remembering the Passover about how God used a lamb in the Exodus to save his people. And like I said, these, when you had this meal, when you celebrated the Passover, it was elaborate.

There was storytelling involved. So for instance, the people were required to wear their sandals, to put a belt around their waist, and to have their staff with them because during the story of the Exodus, when they sacrificed the lamb and they ate the lamb, God told them, you need to get ready to go.

So you've got to be dressed to leave while you're eating. And you've got to eat the meal as quickly as possible. So every year they celebrated the Passover, they would dress like they were leaving somewhere. And you had the unleavened bread, which was unleavened, not because there's something holy about unleavened bread, but because when you're in a hurry, you don't have time to leaven your bread.

And so they would symbolically make the unleavened bread every year to remember the time that God rescued them from Egypt at the Passover, and they were in such a hurry that all they could do was make unleavened bread.

[11 : 32] And, you know, imagine the disciples, so at the Passover meal, the person who led the meal would lift up all these different elements and they would explain them. So they would say, here's the lamb and here's what the lamb means to us.

And here's the bread and here's what the bread means to our people. And then here's Jesus doing the same thing, but he holds up the bread and he says, this is my body.

And he holds up the cup and he says, this is my blood. And the disciples must have been absolutely shocked to know what's going on. And, you know, what's interesting is the one thing that's missing from this story is the most important part of it.

There's no lamb. Jesus doesn't talk about the lamb. And there's an implication, which is the lamb that is at the feast is not the lamb that's sitting on the table.

It's Jesus. Jesus is saying, this bread is my body. This cup is my blood. And there's no lamb here. So, you know, what do you do with that? It's Jesus. That's why Paul says Jesus is our Passover lamb.

[12 : 37] And I want to say what that means, but I want to just pause here because I think it's easy to mistake what Jesus is doing here for something less than what he's actually doing. Some of y'all are teachers and you know this.

A good teacher uses illustrations, whether it's geometry or math or English or science or theology. Good teachers know how to use illustrations where you're trying to explain something hard and so you use a simple image to explain it.

And so Jesus did that. I mean, he would talk about the kingdom of God and he would say, well, it's like a farmer that goes out and sows seeds. Now, there's no real connection between those two images, but it's helpful.

It helps you understand something complicated by understanding something simple. Jesus, what Jesus does here is not just illustrate because that would suggest that he just uses what he's got to try to explain something really hard.

And Mark hints at the fact that there's something deeper going on here in the way that he sets up the meal. So, you know, at the beginning of the passage, Jesus tells his disciples, he sends two of them into the city and he says, you're going to find a man carrying a jug of water.

[13 : 53] He's going to find you and he's going to bring you to a great room where we can celebrate the Passover feast. Now, that sounds simple enough, but if you think about it, Passover was the, Jerusalem was the only place that you were allowed to celebrate Passover because you needed to go to the temple to have the lamb sacrifice.

So what happens during the Passover festival is hundreds of thousands of Jews come from all over Israel and they are all in this one tiny city looking for a room.

I heard one of my friends talk about this passage and he says, the way that he put it was, the only person who could show up on the day of Passover and find a big room would be God himself.

But Jesus just, he knows that this is what's going to happen. He knows that if the disciples go, they're going to find a man and the man's going to bring them to a room. The way that Jesus puts it is, he says, he calls it his guest room.

That may seem like nothing to you. That may seem totally unimportant, but what it's setting up is this idea that everything that Jesus is doing in the last hours of his life is something that he planned. You know, this story almost exactly mirrors what we saw a few weeks ago at the triumphal entry where Jesus tells two disciples, go and find a cult tied up and bring it to me and if the owner asks about it, tell him, I sent you.

[15 : 22] He just knows these things in the last week of his life that these things will be waiting for him when he shows up. And here he comes just knowing that the Passover will be there waiting for him.

And what is Jesus doing here? What does that mean? It means that Jesus, when he shows up at the Passover, he doesn't, it's not like he knows his death is about to happen and he says, well, how can I explain this?

Well, we are celebrating Passover tonight, so I'll use that. It's deeper than that. He's saying, I am here at the Passover for a reason. And the reason is because the Passover, Jesus is not like the Passover lamb.

Jesus is the Passover lamb. The Old Testament was pointing forward to Jesus, saying, this is the one to wait for. Let me see if I can put it like this.

The lamb, the lamb that was slain in the Old Testament in Egypt brought salvation to God's people, but it was a temporary salvation. And here is Jesus at the Passover and he knows that his people need a lamb.

[16 : 34] They need a substitute. And he is going to be the substitute and he's going to bring a greater salvation through his death. That's the claim that Jesus is making.

And you know it's not an off-the-cuff remark because all the way back at Jesus' baptism, remember what John the Baptist said? When he first saw Jesus, he said, behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Now, you could say, well, there's actually a lot of lambs in the Old Testament. There were a lot of lambs that were sacrificed, not just at Passover, but yet all kinds of sacrifices in the Old Testament. And yes, the answer to that is that's absolutely true.

And my argument this morning is all of those blood sacrifices in the Old Testament, every single one of them was pointing forward. It was teaching the people in the Old Testament that they needed a sacrifice.

They needed something that could atone for their sins. And those sacrifices weren't atoning for their sins, but they were pointing forward to something, someone whose death could atone for those sins.

[17 : 41] I think this modern people really struggle with this because we say all that blood, all that sacrifice, we're better than that now. We don't need that kind of stuff anymore.

And God is love. So can't God just forgive? Why does God need to bring death in order to forgive? And people say that, but I think deep down in every human being's heart, we know that justice is necessary and we know that we need justice.

And sometimes you see that in our society and taken in directions maybe you would never take it, but you see that it points back to the person's heart where they know that justice is important. Think about it.

We're a society that claims to love more than any other society. That's all we're about is love. And yet someone on television makes one dumb remark or you bring up one bad tweet from 20 years ago and everybody wants blood.

We are the ultimate cancel culture where someone messes up and all of us suddenly want justice. We want to see that career ruined because they need to know that they've done wrong and they need to be punished for it.

[18 : 50] So we're this society which oddly loves love and yet we're also so vengeful when it comes to punishing other people for what we perceive they've done wrong. But the point I'm trying to make is God is love but he's also just and justice requires that penalties be paid for injustice.

Justice can't let injustice go on. And so what God does is in the sacrifice of the Old Testament he's teaching the people all sin must be atoned for otherwise there is no such thing as justice in the world.

And the amazing thing about what Jesus does what God does with Jesus Christ is he looks at us God looks at us and says you have been unjust and there is a penalty to be paid for your sins.

I'm getting so tongue-tied this morning I can't even stand it. There's a penalty to be paid for your sins and rather than extracting that penalty from us he sends a lamb he sends a sacrifice in his own son to pay for the sins that we have an obligation to pay and he offers that hope out to his people that's what Jesus is doing at the Lord's Supper he's saying I am the lamb I am the lamb who has come to offer a sacrifice for the greatest salvation that you can imagine a true salvation that lasts forever Paul says it in 1 Corinthians 5 Jesus is our Passover lamb now briefly very briefly let me ask who is this lamb for and the explicit answer that Jesus gives is in verse 24 where he says this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many so it's for a lot of people it's for people way beyond the room that Jesus was sitting in with those 12 disciples but it's for anybody who looks at the lamb and who receives the lamb

I think maybe the best way to illustrate it would be to tell a short story this is from the Old Testament and it's a weird story but I think it gives a clear picture here Abraham when even when God came to Abraham and said Abraham I'm going to make you my people I'm going to make you into a nation I'm going to be your God even though you've not done anything to deserve it and God does the strangest thing to ratify that covenant what he does is he says Abraham I want you to go cut a bunch of animals in half now this sounds if you know this story Genesis 15 go read it God tells Abraham to cut a bunch of animals in half and to set the two halves so that there's a pathway in between the halves and the reason that he did this is because in the ancient world when you made an agreement say with another king the way that you would often make an agreement is you would cut these animals in half and make a pathway and both kings would walk through the animals and that was a way of saying if I don't hold up my end of the bargain may what has been done to these animals be done to me so it was a way of kind of calling down a curse on yourself if you're not faithful to the covenant that you just agreed to now God tells Abraham to do that he says cut the animals in half and make the pathway but the strange thing happens is when it's time to walk between the animals and to promise to be faithful

[22 : 25] God puts Abraham to sleep and God is the one who walks between the animals he does it symbolically by being in a fire pot but he goes through the animals now that is weird that's an ancient story but what is he trying to get out there the point is God is saying Abraham you may be unfaithful to me you may break your promises you will break your promises to me but I will be faithful to you I will walk through the animals and I will always be your God and claim to be faithful to you lest what happens to these animals happens to me if I'm not faithful and the exact same thing is happening at the Lord's supper where God what is God asking of us when we receive the cup and the bread not to be perfect because God knows we can't be perfect we've already been too unfaithful we've already deserved the judgment but we receive his blood and we receive his body as a way of saying he has been faithful to the covenant even when we have not been faithful to the covenant and that's what it means to be a

Christian it means to come to the table and say I cannot earn the love of God I cannot and if you believe you can you can't come to the table because you can't I cannot earn the love of God but what I can do is receive the love I can receive the love and place my hope just like the Egyptians placed excuse me not the Egyptians just like the Israelites placed their faith in the lamb and the idea that the lamb would atone for their sins we place our faith in Jesus believing that his blood covers us that's what it means to be a Christian it's to hope in that there's an old story told in the Scottish church in the Scottish church there was a lot of emphasis sometimes an unhelpful emphasis on being prepared for the Lord's Supper so they would announce the Lord's Supper well in advance and they would tell you you need to get your heart ready and that's a good thing to do but one of the unfortunate side effects is that people would often come to the

Lord's Supper and they would feel like they weren't worthy enough to receive the bread and the wine and there's a story that's told about a young lady who's sitting on the front row at the Lord's Supper and everybody is coming forward to receive the bread and the wine and the lady just won't move and she's in tears and the pastor knows her and knows that she's a believer and he knows that she's not coming forward because she feels so guilty about the person that she is and the story goes that he just walks up to her and he whispers into her ear take it last this is for sinners that's the message of the Lord's Supper take it not because you've earned it not because you deserve it but because it is for sinners let's pray heavenly father help us to always place all of our faith only in you in your son's name we pray amen yes