

Preparing the Passover

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Preacher: Colin Dow

[0 : 00] Let's read together now in the Gospel according to Luke and chapter 22.! And we'll read from verse 7 to verse 13.

! This is on page number 881 of the Church Bible. Luke chapter 22 from verse 7.

Then came the day of the unleavened bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John saying, Go and prepare the Passover for us that we may eat it.

They said to him, Where would you have us prepare it? He said to them, Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you.

Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, The teacher says to you, Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

[1 : 03] And he will show you a large upper room furnished. Prepare it there. And they went and found it just as he had told them. And they prepared the Passover.

Heavenly Father, bring your ancient and powerful word into the present so that it can be delivered and heard with all the freshness of a new day, with all the immediacy of a friend's embrace.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Perfect preparation prevents poor performance.

Perfect preparation prevents poor performance. On Saturday, many of us watch our favorite football teams. For 90 minutes, two teams battle each other.

For those two teams, those 90 minutes are the pinnacle of their week's effort. What we don't see are the hours and hours they spend on the training ground, perfecting their ball skills, improving their stamina, and working on set plays.

[2 : 09] What we see on Saturday is the performance. What we don't see through the week is the preparation. But as we know, if a team does not prepare well, it won't perform well.

So, perfect preparation prevents poor performance. Now, this is true in every sphere of life. At home, at work, and play, nobody really expects me to stand up and deliver a sermon without having spent many hours preparing it beforehand.

The greatest performance in history required the greatest preparation in history. The greatest performance in history required the greatest preparation in history.

Our salvation from sin and death through the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest performance in history. Only the infinitely wise and loving God could have prepared for it.

And prepare for it, He did, from before the creation of the universe. In our verses in Luke chapter 22, 7 through 13, with its account of the Passover meal, the word prepare dominates.

[3 : 30] Since before the creation of the world, God has been preparing for what will happen the next day on from this. These preparations are coming to a conclusion.

So, now is not the time to drop the ball. Jesus finalizes His plans, not just for the Jewish festival of Passover, but for the entirety of the human race and our salvation.

This passage might seem procedural, the planning of a meal, but behind it all, to borrow from that Christmas carol, are the hopes and fears of all the years.

It's all about Jesus, you see. It always is. Jesus is the hero of Luke's gospel. Jesus is every Christian's hero. He's the hero of this passage in preparing the Passover.

And that in two ways. First of all, He's preparing a sacrifice. And then He's preparing His disciples. He's preparing a sacrifice and preparing His disciples.

[4 : 35] Through this text today, God is calling us to see that salvation through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event in all of history.

To ignore or reject it is to commit the greatest of all sins against God. But to accept and receive it is to enjoy the fullness of all God has been working for millions of years to give you.

First of all then, this passage is about preparing His sacrifice. Preparing His sacrifice. Our passage begins with a reference to sacrifice. Then came the day of the unleavened bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

As we saw a couple of weeks ago, this was the Passover season when the Jews looked back and celebrated their exodus from Egypt. If you remember, the Jews had been commanded to make bread without yeast, unleavened bread, to kill a lamb, to eat its meat together with the bread and some herbs, in readiness to hurriedly leave Egypt.

The lamb was killed or more properly sacrificed, and its blood was painted on the doorposts and lintels of Jewish houses. When the angel of the Lord saw the blood, he passed over those houses, and he rained down judgment on the Egyptians instead.

[6 : 02] Now, as we saw two weeks ago, Luke wants us to compare Jesus not so much to the Passover lamb, but to the firstborn son of Egypt. If you remember the firstborn sons of Egypt, were judged and put to death by the angel of the Lord, so that the Israelites could be released from their slavery, nevertheless here, it is the Passover lamb which is referred to.

So this being the first verse is setting the tone for the entire passage. It's about a sacrifice being made which will fulfill and complete all that took place at the first Passover, over a thousand years before this, under Moses.

And in this passage, Jesus is preparing the sacrifice in anticipation of him being the sacrifice. Jesus, Jesus, both the sacrificer and the sacrifice.

He prepares the sacrifice of the Passover meal by commissioning Peter and John, two of his disciples, to go into Jerusalem and to find the upper room, where he and his disciples will remember and celebrate God's salvation of their ancestors from Egypt, the sacrifice of the sacrifice of the Lamb.

We don't need to overthink how Jesus arranged the upper room. Most commentators think that previous to this episode, Jesus had prearranged with a household holder in Jerusalem to rent the upper room.

[7 : 36] Having said that, back in those days, homeowners in Jerusalem were compelled to offer hospitality free of charge at Passover time to those from outside the city who had come to celebrate the Passover.

So Jesus had probably prearranged to celebrate the Passover in that upper room. There's nothing in this arrangement we need to put down to Jesus' spiritually mystical knowledge.

It's all part of his preparation of the Passover. What is odd, however, is that Jesus tells his disciples to look for a man carrying a jar of water.

In those days, jars of water weren't carried by men, but by women. So this would have been unusual. Perhaps it was a type of code. Jesus had agreed to beforehand with the homeowner.

The point is, however, although it was the disciples who were immediately responsible for preparing the meal, it's Jesus who was the ultimate preparer.

[8 : 49] Jesus has been working behind the scenes to make everything perfect for that sacrificial meal. After all, perfect preparation prevents poor performance.

Jesus had prepared it all in readiness for the perfect evening before the most momentous day in the history of the world, the day of his sacrifice on the cross.

As I said in my introduction, from before the beginning of the world, in the council of the divine trinity, God prepared our salvation.

In love, God the Father devised the plan. In grace, God the Son promised to sacrifice himself. In fellowship, God the Holy Spirit vowed to apply the blessings of Jesus' sacrifice to all those for whom he had died.

Before time began, God had prepared everything for our salvation. I'm presently preparing for our summer holidays, which God willing will enjoy in a few weeks' time.

[9 : 54] The thought of God preparing my salvation for thousands of years and more is beyond our understanding.

But that's what the Bible tells us, and that's what we believe. From the beginning of time, God was working out his plan. Even in the Garden of Eden, the so-called first gospel, the Proto-Evangelium, God promised that a descendant of Eve would crush the devil under his feet.

And throughout the Old Testament, God was working out that plan, perfectly preparing for the coming of his Son, who would sacrifice himself to take away our sins and finally defeat Satan.

And now on this last evening, before the cross, Jesus ensures everything is perfectly prepared. Nothing is left to chance. When it comes to God, nothing's ever left to chance. It's all perfectly planned, perfectly prepared, perfectly performed. That's true when it came to the cross of Jesus. This was no tragic accident, no random event.

[11:07] From before the world was created, God was preparing everything according to his perfect plan. That's also true when it comes to the details of our lives as Christians.

God has planned out all the details. They're not random. It's not the luck of the draw. They are God's perfect plan for us. They may be painful.

We may not wish them on ourselves. But in love and wisdom, God knows what he's doing with us. He is working all things out in our lives for our good and for his glory.

One day, one day we'll know why God did things the way he did. And one day we'll praise him for it. But Jesus did not just perfectly prepare the Passover sacrifice.

Jesus was the ultimate Passover sacrifice. He was the ultimate Passover sacrifice. The cross was to be the fulfillment of all to which the Passover pointed.

[12:17] And Jesus was the ultimate sacrificial lamb, the firstborn of God, to be put to death in order to pay the price and set us free from the slavery of sin, guilt, and death.

The sacrificial lambs were slaughtered. The firstborn of Egypt were put to death, and Jesus was put to death on the cross, slaughtered as the Lamb of God to take away our sin.

And Jesus knew all these things. And preparing himself for all that he was going to suffer on the next day. In a sense, he was reminding himself of what he was saving his people from and for. Perhaps he was thinking back to all the stories and songs and prophecies of the Old Testament which speak of him. Maybe that wonderful story of how God stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son Isaac with the words, God himself will provide the sacrifice.

And how Jesus knew he was to be that sacrifice. Our Lord Jesus, who loved us from before the beginning of the universe, that perfect Passover sacrifice, he is to be that sacrifice.

[13:28] It must have been terrifying to be a First World War British soldier in the trenches the night before a morning attack. What thoughts were going through their minds.

I can just picture a normal Tommy reaching into his inside pocket, pulling out a photograph of his wife and child safely at home, and thinking to himself, this is why I'm laying my life on the line. He loves them, so he's prepared to give his life for them. That's why he'll risk his life in the next morning's attack. Jesus is preparing the Passover sacrifice, and more importantly, he's preparing himself to be the Passover sacrifice.

He's going to spend the evening with those he loves the most in the world, as if to say, this is why I'm giving my life. Love drew the plan of salvation, and now love is preparing the perfect sacrifice himself.

Can you think what love drove him to sovereignly prepare so lovingly, wisely, and perfectly? And for whom is that love?

[14:42] It is for you, and it's for me. For all for whom he would willingly sacrifice himself on the cross. Perfect preparation prevents poor performance, but that perfect preparation was driven and motivated by the infinite, eternal, unchangeable love of the Father.

What will we do with such sovereignty? What will we do with such love? What will we do with Jesus, the final Passover, his death on the cross? What will we do with all this perfect preparation if the preparation of the Godhead for the cross is of infinite moment?

Your decision for or against Christ at this time is also for you of infinite moment. To contextualize this, everything in your life, everything, has been carefully prepared by God to bring you to this very moment in Crow Road Free Church, this morning, where you are being given an opportunity to respond to the gospel in faith.

What will you do with it? Preparing his sacrifice. And then secondly, preparing his disciples.

Preparing his disciples. The next day on from the events recorded of this passage, Jesus is going to be tortured, arrested, and executed. As we've learned, Jesus knew it was going to happen, so he was preparing everything so that it could be the ultimate Passover sacrifice.

[16:25] Now, one might expect, given the momentous nature of what he was going to experience the next day, Jesus would turn in upon himself, mentally trying to prepare himself in solitude.

Perhaps that's what I'd have done. Perhaps that's what you'd have done. Spending the evening by oneself, trying to strengthen our minds, perhaps even giving in to our own personal despair.

But he doesn't. His thoughts turn from himself to his disciples. He commands Peter and John, saying, go and prepare the Passover for us, but we may eat it. The emphasis you see is on us, we. Then in verse 11, the disciples are to say to the homeowner, what is the guest room that I may eat the Passover with my disciples? The emphasis is not on the solitude of Jesus. On the night before his execution, Jesus spends time with his disciples. Not solitude, but company, not aloneness, but witness. [17 : 32] There's a very important lesson for us as Christians here, namely that in our times of greatest pain, while it's natural for us to want to be alone, sometimes the most important thing is to have company.

That's especially true when it comes to time of stress or anxiety or depression. At these times, our natural instinct is to withdraw and to be alone, but our natural instinct is not helpful. We need our own time, but we also need other Christians around us to listen to us, to be with us, to pray with us. We need some aloneness, but we also need witness. Why did Jesus emphasize we, us, with? I want to suggest that he did it for two reasons. First of all, for his own benefit. For his own benefit.

His disciples were his closest friend. He found strength in their company. Jesus was not a stoic, strong man, the pale rider of western movies. He was a real human being and at his time of greatest need, he found comfort in being with his friends.

[18 : 46] He'd taken Peter and John with him onto the Mount of Transfiguration. He had wanted them to see his glory and now he wants Peter and John with him again, together with the other disciples, to share with him this last night.

This is the humanity of Jesus on display. He wants to hold on to his disciples, to enjoy their company, to remind himself, this is why I'm going to the cross.

I'm going there to save these people from their sins and to give them eternal life with me in the new heavens and the new earth. Jesus wanted to look into their eyes and see that for all their weakness, they loved him.

He found that on this occasion they gave him strength. Jesus was a real man who needed the support and company of others. Jesus was made for relationship, which after all is the definition of what it means to be made in or as God's image and to be a real human being.

We need relationship. Jesus wanted to spend the evening with his disciples for his own benefit, but perhaps even more than that, Jesus wanted to spend the night with his disciples for their benefit, for their benefit.

[20 : 04] He wanted to prepare them for the traumatic events of the next day and even more so what would happen after he left them. For Jesus, it's not about me or I, but about we, us, with.

He knows that within the space of a few hours, his disciples are going to get the biggest shock of their lives. They're going to be transformed from bold and courageous men into shells of fear and weakness. Peter will be so afraid that he'll deny Jesus three times.

Others will melt away into the darkness, finally returning to this upper room, locking it solid to hide from the authorities. Their grief will be overwhelming.

They'll be lost and bewildered. They've been following Jesus for three years. They had placed their faith in him to be the Messiah of Israel who at some point would rise to kingship.

They were so sure that they were on the winning side that in the space of a day they'd watch him be humiliated and executed. Added to that was their personal friendship with Jesus, a friendship birthed in his grace and love, a friendship which had grown to absolute devotion.

[21 : 17] They had left everything for him and without him they didn't know what they would do. It was terrifying. And so Jesus far from thinking about himself was thinking about them.

He wanted to prepare them for what would happen. Luke doesn't record what we've come to know as the upper room discourse John 14 through 17. The first words of that upper room discourse are so beautiful.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. trust also in me. He'll show them by washing their feet just how committed he is to them and how committed he'll always be to them.

He'll tell them of the coming of the Holy Spirit and how he, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit will always be with them. Turning back to Luke as we'll see next week, he'll institute the Lord's Supper through these simple elements of bread and wine a far simpler sacrament than that of the Passover.

He'll promise them strength to face all the challenges which lie ahead. And through the words of institution he'll remind them that the future is brighter than they could ever imagine.

[22 : 27] That they'll share a heavenly banquet with him in glory. He wants them to see him looking directly into their eyes and experiencing his love permeating their hearts.

He wants them to hear his grace-filled words and to experience the beauty of his touch. Jesus wants them to be with him and he expresses his longing for them in preparing this perfect and ultimate Passover meal.

He is planning for the future while enjoying the present. Even though Jesus is the King of glory and had eternally experienced the worship of the angels he thinks lovingly of these weak sinful men who had become his friends and disciples.

These are the first fruit of his redeeming work. These are why he's going to the cross. Oh there's Peter the impulsive one. There's James and John the temperamental ones.

There's Thomas the gloomy one. And all the others had their flaws also. But he loved them and this night he wanted to reinforce his love for them so that whatever they took away from the upper room it would be this.

[23 : 51] Jesus loved me and he gave himself for me. Do you know today that Jesus loves you? Not in some coldly clinical decision but a warm-hearted affection that longs for you.

He wants to comfort you. He wants to bring you joy and forgiveness to strengthen and confirm you. He wants you. You want him.

The upper room plays a central role in the New Testament. It was in this upper room Jesus prepared himself and his disciples for his departure. It was from this upper room Jesus left to go to the garden of Gethsemane.

It was to this upper room the cowering terrified disciples ran and hid after the crucifixion. It was to this room certain ladies ran on Easter Sunday telling the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead.

It was in this upper room Jesus first appeared to his disciples, his first words being peace be with you. It was in this upper room the early Christians prayed.

[25 : 08] It was from this room the disciples went to the temple on the day of Pentecost where Peter preached and 5,000 people were converted. This upper room is the labor theater of the early church giving birth to the early church.

church. It all begins here in this guest room in the city of Jerusalem. And from this upper room the church has spread all over the world with the twelve disciples becoming billions of disciples.

And it was all because Jesus prepared not just the room, he prepared the entire history of the world with such perfect love, wisdom, and precision. Now this morning this building here in Crow Road is a sort of upper room and as the word is preached Jesus is present with us by his Holy Spirit.

What does he see? He may not see much faith in him, but even faith as small as a mustard seed is enough. He may not see much love for him, but even the faintest flicker is enough.

Perhaps we did not prepare ourselves to meet with Jesus this morning, but he prepared to meet with us. Well, now is the time for all of us to respond to Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice for our sin and guilt.

[26 : 34] What will we do with this Jesus? Let us pray. We worship and praise you, O Lord our God, divine trinity, that from before the creation of the world, O Father, you loved us with a love that will not let us go.

O Son, you graced us to be the perfect sacrifice for our sin. And O Holy Spirit, you shared fellowship with us to apply all the benefits of the cross to us.

You brought us here today in your perfect preparation and providence. And we pray, Lord, that even as the word has gone forth, it would sink deep into our hearts and cause us to respond in faith and trust in the Jesus who loved me and gave himself for me.

Amen. Amen.