

A Night to Remember

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Preacher: Rt. Rev. Wallace Benn

[0 : 00] It's a very great pleasure to be here with you this morning. My wife and I, we often pray for you, having heard much about this church from Steve James, who's a great personal friend.

So it's wonderful to be here with you this morning, and a lovely opportunity for me to be able to say to you thank you for your faithfulness as a church in standing for the gospel and the truth of the Word of God.

We stand with you and want to stand beside you in this great privilege and responsibility for faithfully standing for God's truth in our day and generation.

And if I may say, while I'm here, and perhaps because your good rector is perhaps not cared for episcopally as he might be, can I say, look after him, for he is a treasure.

And David, thank you for your courageous and inspirational leadership. It's a privilege to be here this morning. Now, would you turn with me, please, to Exodus chapter 12.

[1 : 14] And I want to read again to you four verses to focus our attention as we look at three chapters together. Exodus chapter 12 and verse 11.

In this manner you shall eat it, with your belt fastened and your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it in haste.

It is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast.

And on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are.

And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations.

[2 : 19] As a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. I know that you've been working through the book of Exodus and no doubt have already discovered many wonderful truths as you've looked at this book together.

But it's been left to me this morning to have the golden nugget of the whole book. Indeed, this is the great redemptive act of God in the Old Testament, that more than any other constituted the people of God.

And it is a great redemptive act of God that points forward to the greatest redemptive act of God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And is picked up, it's not only taught through the whole of the Old Testament as absolutely crucial and key, but is picked up by the New Testament and uses a picture of the work of Jesus Christ.

Let me give you three references. First of all, 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 7. Paul wrote, For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

[3 : 30] Let us therefore celebrate the festival with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. John, in his Gospel, tells us that John the Baptist, when he saw the Lord Jesus, the first great significant truth of the Gospel of John after the prologue, John the Baptist saw Jesus coming and he said this, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And the book of Hebrews tells us, Hebrews 11, 28, By faith, Moses kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch him.

So, let me recap again, just briefly. These chapters tell the story of the great act of God's redemption and deliverance in the Old Testament.

The act that more than any other constituted the people of God. An act which is a type or a picture of what is to come in Christ.

I want to look at this story under three headings. First of all, ruin. The awfulness of divine judgment. When we look at this story of the tenth and final plague, we're reminded that when God's judgment comes, and particularly when God's final judgment comes, it comes after considerable patience. [5 : 22] Why is it that God's day of judgment has been delayed, it would seem? Why is it the Lord has not yet returned? The New Testament tells us it is in order to give us time to repent.

It is God's patience. Final judgment in this story comes after considerable patience. It is, after all, the tenth plague after nine others.

Secondly, judgment, the judgment of God is fair and appropriate. If we look back over the previous chapters of Exodus, we discover the opening part of the story tells us that Moses escaped with his life at a period where Pharaoh was killing all the male children of the Israelites.

And the other chapters tell us a story of barbarity and slavery and cruelty to God's professed people. When God's judgment comes, final judgment comes, it is fair and appropriate.

And when you and I stand before the judgment of God, which we all will do one day, we will be bound to say, whether we wish to or not, that God's judgment is fair and appropriate.

[6 : 56] Thirdly, we notice that God's judgment falls on those who trust in other gods other than himself. other gods who are no gods and yet take God's rightful place in our lives.

This story tells us that trust in other gods brings inevitable judgment. Our gods today may not be of wood and stone like some of the Egyptian gods, but nonetheless, they're just as real.

It may be the dominance of ambition or reputation. It may be the god of a big bank balance or promotion. It may be the god of materialism and simply more possessions or better holidays.

Or it may be the god of self-absorption and self-possession, which has become such a god in the Western world. This story tells us that trust in other gods brings inevitable judgment.

And it tells us finally that there was only one means of escape from the just, fair, but terrible judgment of a holy god on the final day of his judgment.

[8 : 19] For God, if he is to be not only a god of love as we shall see in a moment, but a god of holiness and justice, must judge sin. But this story reminds us there is only one means of escape from the just and fair but terrible final judgment of God.

Which reminds us that there is no escape for you or for me on that day, the final day of God's judgment, which we deeply know in our hearts we must face.

No escape except one. And that leads me to my second point. And the word is redemption. If the first is ruin, the second happily and joyfully is redemption.

The costliness and carefulness of divine redemption. You see, God was teaching his people here a very important principle.

The principle of substitution. the principle of a life for a life. If God's judgment demands, in fact, death, there is no escape from it except the substitution of another life.

[9 : 41] And when we're told this story about the great Passover, great care is taken in telling us the details.

We're told in chapter 12 and verse 5 that the lamb is to be without blemish. The lamb whose blood is to be taken and put on the doorposts of the house and across the lintel is to be without blemish. And then another great and significant little comment is made in chapter 12 and verse 46, which becomes very significant after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, that no bone is to be broken of the lamb.

There is great care in the details in the description given by God of what is to take place in the sacrifice of the lamb and when exactly that sacrifice is to be made.

Two great truths are taught here. It is the lamb's blood that averts judgment. It is being, as we'll say in a moment, under the blood of the lamb that alone averts judgment.

[11 : 04] And secondly, the lamb himself provided sustenance for the journey towards the promised land. They were to eat roast lamb.

that was to sustain them for quick and immediate departure and the journey that was ahead of them. The Passover then averted God's judgment.

Let me remind you again of verse 13 of chapter 12. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. And so down in verse 23 and 27. God's mercy and loving provision alone, trusted in by the people, could alone avert judgment for them.

It was not enough to be numbered amongst God's people on that night. It was not enough simply to say, I'm one of the Israelites.

[12:18] I belong to the congregation of the Israelites. There was only one means of escape and that was to trust against the human odds in God's provision by the blood of a lamb.

God's son. Dear friends, there is only one way for you and I to stand safe and forgiven on the final day of God's judgment.

And that is trust in the provision of God, of his beloved son, as the lamb of God, who takes away our sins.

There is no other means of escape from the just and holy judgment of God than that. It is no good trusting in church membership.

It is no good even saying that you're a personal friend of David Short and you think he's wonderful. Or that you have come every Sunday during most of your life to St.

[13:32] John's Shaughnessy. Excellent church that it is. Now they're behind that and behind the good ordinances of a faithful Christian congregation.

It needs to be personal trust in the blood of the lamb. One of the stories I like best from my own experience, my uncle who was a great lay preacher, but he was an auctioneer and he didn't like to drive himself.

And he really didn't like motoring a lot, but he had to travel quite a bit. But on one occasion in the middle of Ireland, he broke down and on the front of his car, he had two AA badges.

One the oldest possible AA badge and the other the newest possible on either side of his radiator. He rang up the AA and a voice said the other end, are you a member, sir?

And he said, oh yes, I've got AA badges on the front of my car. And a voice said, you haven't paid your membership sub. See, it's possible to have the badges of belonging to Christ without the reality of faith there.

[14:51] There's only one way for you and I to stand forgiven and safe on the final day of God's judgment, let me say it again, and that is trusting in the blood of the Lamb.

And by the way, for those of you studying theology, this makes an interesting comment on the new perspective which some theologians have adopted regarding the teaching of Paul in the New Testament, that simply to belong to the congregation of God's people, the covenant people, brings the blessing of justifying grace.

No, says this story, it's not enough to belong. We need to be personally trusting in the blood of the Lamb. And indeed, it is that personal trust that shows whether we're genuinely the people of God or not.

Let me say it again, the Lamb trusted a verse judgment, and He Himself, by His death and by His grace, sustains us in our journey towards the promised land, which the Bible tells us in the New Testament for us, is heaven.

Ruin, redemption, and thirdly, remembrance. The importance of human remembering. It's so easy to forget, isn't it?

[16:19] And so, God provides a means whereby the people of God were to year on year remember during one week of their calendar to set it aside as a time of special remembrance.

It is desperately easy to forget. I wonder if you've got a good forgettery like I have at times. My wife and I were engaged for two years and four months and about three days before we got married. it was rather a long period. And I had a chart in my study, it depressed me to do it for any longer than this, which began at a hundred weeks to the wedding day.

And I counted down and so in my mind firmly there was this wedding day that I was looking forward to. But can I tell you what happened? At the time when we were just about to celebrate our first anniversary, I forgot the date.

it's easy, isn't it, to forget. And so God provides a means for us.

[17:32] He provided for the people under the old covenant to remember this act of redemption. And the risen Lord Jesus has provided for us in the Holy Communion service a regular reminder of His death and passion for us.

His blood shed for us as the Lamb of God. You see, this redemption reconstituted the people then as the people of God. And every generation of God's people under the old covenant stood on this as every generation of God's people under the wonderful provision of God in the new covenant stand only upon the death of Jesus.

years. You see, this was to be, as God said to the people of old in verse 2 of chapter 12, this was to be the beginning of months for them.

In other words, this was to be the day they were born again as God's people, to have a whole new beginning. And that whole new beginning was possible because of the grace and mercy of God. And so when in future generations a child might ask a parent, why do we celebrate the Passover? This is what they were to say.

[18 : 59] Chapter 13 and verse 8. I like the translation of the TNIV on this verse. The parent was to say, I do this because of what the Lord did for me.

I remember his death because he did it for me. And verse 9 and verse 14, for with a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt from the hand of slavery and bondage.

You see, they were to remember, indeed it was to be central to their life, that what they couldn't do for themselves, the Lord graciously did.

And therefore, they were to rejoice, they were to remember, they were to party and celebrate. By the way, God's people can be forgiven for a lot, but not dullness.

They were to be people who celebrated the amazing goodness and grace of God, and didn't forget it, but rather allowed their lives and their yearly calendar to revolve around it.

[20 : 14] They were to rejoice as forgiven people by the mercy and grace of God. Dear friends, as I come to a conclusion, let me remind you, Jesus, the Lamb of God, saves us from judgment.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, sustains us for living. Jesus, the Lamb of God, leads us to heaven as God led the people out by a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire in this story.

Jesus, as the Lamb of God, is God's gracious provision for us. It only leaves me to ask one question and it's this.

As God has made such a wonderful provision out of love for you, in order that His just judgment might be averted, God has made this wonderful provision.

Are you trusting in His provision? is your trust in the blood of the Lamb? And are you trusting in Him alone?

[21 : 40] You see, God's people knew that not only were they to remember and rejoice, to party, to celebrate, but there was only one proper response to all that God had done for them, and that was to surrender their lives in worship, as we're reminded in 12, verse 27.

And that meant more than just an hour or two on Sunday, it meant a life surrendered to the God who so wonderfully and so graciously provided for them.

Are you trusting in Him alone, the Lamb of God? God? I hope very much that as every one of us leaves church this morning, we'll be able to go out of this building saying, I'm under the blood of the Lamb.

I'm trusting in God's provision for me, and I rejoice in the forgiveness that He has won for me at such cost that I could never have gained for myself.

And if this morning God has been speaking to you, and for the very first time you're coming to see what God has done for you in His beloved Son, and you want to take a step of faith, to begin the journey of faith with the Lord, to give your life to Him, to surrender to Him, and accept what He did for you, would you like to ask me afterwards for a booklet, which I'd be delighted to give you?

[23 : 13] I won't take your name and address, I won't tell the rector you asked me, but I think you will find it helpful, and I offer that to you.

But can I encourage you also to take up the offer in the notice sheet today of going on a Discovering Christ course, which is beginning very shortly.

This will help you think through what it means to accept the provision of God for our salvation. And to walk with Him for the rest of our days.

May God grant that we each walk out of church trusting in the blood of the Lamb. Let us pray.

Amen. Amen. Father, we thank You for this magnificent passage of Scripture, this magnificent reminder of Your grace and mercy and goodness, Your provision for Your people of old.

And we thank You for the even more wonderful provision of Your beloved Son as the Lamb of God who takes away our sins. May our love for Him be renewed, may our trust in Him be real, and may our surrender to Him be the joy of our lives.

[24 : 44] For Jesus' sake. Amen. God it is for the always your