

The New Covenant in My Blood
Luke 22:7-30
August 7, 2022
Rev. Dave Dorst
CenterPoint Church

Read Luke 22:7-30

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." (Isaiah 40:8)

Introduction

You may know that in America, if you are on death row, you are given whatever you want for your final meal. Some people order large meals right before they are executed (there is someone who actually documented all these):

- A man named Earl Forrest, executed in Missouri in 2016, ordered a feast of pasta, steak, tomatoes and cucumbers, fruit, chocolate cake, and a glass of milk.
- Ricky Rector ordered steak, chicken, cherry KoolAid, and pecan pie, though he didn't touch the pie because he told the guards he was saving it for later.
- Ronnie Lee Gardner, ordered steak, lobster, apple pie, and ice cream, while watching the extended editions of the *Lord of the Rings* movies.

Some people order very little:

- Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber, asked only for two pints of mint chocolate chip ice cream.
- Christopher Brooks, before he was executed in Alabama, ordered two peanut butter cups and a Coke for his last meal.
- Victor Feguer, who was electrocuted in Iowa in the 1960s, ordered just a single olive for his final meal.¹

A strange, perhaps gruesome way to begin a sermon, I know. But our Scripture passage this morning records the final meal of a condemned man. We refer to this passage, and the parallel accounts in the other Gospels, as the Last Supper. This was Thursday night of Holy Week, and following this meal, Jesus would lead His disciples out to a garden to pray, which would be interrupted by a band of soldiers arresting Him. That would lead very quickly to His trial, conviction, and crucifixion. Unlike the US justice system that sometimes takes years to move a man to death row, all it took was one word from the governor to send a man to the cross that same day.

This meal has deeper significance, though, than just being the last thing eaten by a man who would die soon. This meal was a memorial, something that its founder meant to be observed for the rest of human history because it commemorated something historic. At the same time that we call this the "Last Supper," we can also refer to it as the "First Communion." It replaced a deeply significant meal that God's covenant people had observed for many hundreds of years because it was tied to the beginning of a new relationship between God and His people.

Our first seven verses show us

I. The Preparations for the Old Covenant Meal (vv. 7-13)

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." ⁹ They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" ¹⁰ He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a

¹ <https://www.therichest.com/shocking/15-famous-last-meals-on-death-row/>

man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹ 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?' ¹² And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." ¹³ And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Last April (2021), I was looking for a way to make the Easter weekend more spiritually meaningful, so I googled "Liturgy for Passover Seder" (Seder means "order"). I had participated in seders a couple of times, but had never led one, so I printed out the pages, told my family what night we were going to observe it, and set about collecting everything we needed for the meal. I got eggs, parsley, lamb, wine/juice, horseradish, and matzah. There are 15 parts of the seder, with prayers, readings, some explanations in question/answer format, and a fair amount of hand washing. There are parts in Hebrew and in English, as well as parts for the children and the parents; at one point you spill a drop of wine as you list each plague from the Exodus. The main feedback from my family was: "That was really meaningful, but don't use horseradish on anything ever."

Jesus put together His Passover meal in this passage, and this consisted mostly of His delegating to Peter and John. Just as Jesus had given instructions for his disciples to borrow a donkey from some random man in Jerusalem for Palm Sunday, so he told them to find a man carrying a jar and he'll take you to the house where they would eat. Did Jesus set all of this up in advance, having met with the homeowner and gotten permission to use the room, or did Jesus' divine knowledge of all things allow Him to know that there was a man who was more than willing to share his home with men who asked him? I lean hard on the latter interpretation (as I did on Palm Sunday), because I see no reason for Luke to share this story if it's simply a mechanical explanation of how the disciples carried out something that Jesus had planned down to the T. I think Luke is calling attention to Jesus' omniscience, His knowledge of all things.

We studied the Passover and the events that happened when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt when we were in our sermon series in Exodus back in 2020. Let me summarize the instructions that were given in Exodus 12:

- Every household was to take a lamb and slaughter it in their home,
- They were to take some of its blood and put it on their doorposts,
- Then they would eat the lamb, roasted with unleavened bread and bitter herbs,
- That night God sent an angel through the land of Egypt to strike down the firstborn sons,
- When he came to a house with blood on it, he passed over it and did not kill the firstborn inside,
- It ended with the instructions: *"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast."* (Exodus 12:14)

So the Jews had been observing this meal every year for some 1,400 years! And observant Jews still keep the Passover meal today, stretching it well over 3,000 years. This is the meal that Jesus shared with His disciples that night. But after that night, there would be no need for Christ's followers to celebrate the Passover, as it would be transformed into a new sacrament. The next seven verses are

II. The Elements of the New Covenant Meal (vv. 14-20)

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

²⁰ *And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*

This passage records two sets of eating and drinking. Verses 14-18 record Jesus eating the Passover meal, the cooked lamb, and drinking from the wine cup that is part of the Passover liturgy. Then verses 19-20 record Jesus adding on to the Passover celebration by giving them bread that symbolized His body and a cup of wine that symbolized His blood. What He was actually doing was offering a new explanation, departing from the traditional liturgy of the Passover. He was essentially saying, "this bread is not about Egypt and escaping slavery, this bread is my body, which is given for you. This wine now refers to my blood, not the blood of the lambs." The unleavened bread of the Passover meal was called the bread of affliction because it reminded the Jews of their many years of slavery in Egypt. The bread would still be associated with affliction, but now it would be the torment and death of Jesus. The blood of the lamb smeared on the doorpost for protection was a sign that a death had already occurred in that house; the lamb died in the place of the firstborn son. And so, the new covenant cup of wine would be a sign that the lamb of God had died in the place of His people.

Two of the most common elements that you could find in the ancient world – bread and wine – were the symbols that Jesus used to remind His people of His sacrifice for them. And these elements are both a memorial remembrance, but also the signs of the new covenant. Covenant is one of those Christian words that we all nod along to and think we understand what it means, but maybe some of us are not very clear on what it is. A covenant is an agreement or a pact between two parties. Wayne Grudem's concise definition of a Biblical covenant is "an unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship."² The original covenant was the covenant of works with Adam: if you do not sin, you will live; if you sin, you will die. Adam, of course, broke that covenant, and death came into the world. God then provided the covenant of grace, where when humans sinned against Him, they could atone for their sins by sacrificing animals. That covenant had been in existence for thousands of years, but now there was a new covenant, one that would do away with the bloods of animals. Whose blood would be used in this one? "*The new covenant in MY blood.*" God Himself, God the Son. The Old Covenant was external, the New Covenant would be internal, as Jeremiah 31:33 prophesied: "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write on their hearts.*"

Often when I am explaining the Lord's Supper, I will mention that in participating in this supper, we are simultaneously looking back at the past, looking at our lives in the present, and looking ahead to the future. What do I mean by that? We look to the past because the bread and wine make us look at the cross of Christ from two thousand years ago; His once for all time sacrifice of His body for us. We look to the present because we are confessing our sins, receiving His grace and being spiritually fed now as we observe this sacrament. And we are looking forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb at the end of time that is talked about in Revelation 19. Verses 16 and 18 allude to this – "*I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God*" and "*I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.*" Every time we take communion, we thank God for Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf, we ask for renewal of our faith today, and we look forward in hope to our eternal home in heaven.

The final passage goes from the inauguration of the covenant to how we should act as believers:

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), p. 515.

III. Striving to be the Greatest in the New Covenant (vv. 21-30)

²¹ But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²² For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" ²³ And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this. ²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵ And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷ For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. ²⁸ "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

You may know the name Carl Trueman. He is an author, theologian, and a professor at Grove City College. He has written some wonderful books and is a profound Reformed theologian; he is an in-demand speaker and lecturer. I've met him one time – the week after Easter when we attended the church where he is a member. When we first got there, I was looking around because I had seen him when I came in. I wondered if he'd be preaching or assisting in the liturgy. Was he getting ready to drop pearls of wisdom on the congregation, blow us away with his brilliant insight? Not that week. When I finally spotted after the service started, he was sitting in the nursery. This man - who holds a PhD from the University of Aberdeen, was the church history professor at Westminster Seminary, and was the editor of a highly regarded theological journal – was sitting playing with children. Now that's someone who understands verse 26 – "*let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.*"

As we've seen, Jesus was pouring out His heart to His disciples, and in the midst of that were two very disappointing things: 1) there was a traitor amongst them, and 2) the disciples really didn't grasp what Jesus was saying because they were arguing about who would be the greatest. I talked about Judas' betrayal two weeks ago, so I'm not going to spend time on that now. But how interesting that immediately after trying to narrow down who the worst among them was, they pivoted into a discussion about who the greatest among them was. That's a strange segue; imagine Peter or John saying, "Well, I guess we we'll have to wait and see who betrays Jesus, and since we can't figure it out, let's talk about something else. I know: one of us has to be the MVP of this band of followers, one of us should win the greatest award. Who would you guys vote for?"

And Jesus just buried His head in His hands. Well, it doesn't say that, but you have to imagine that He's frustrated. They've just partaken of the communion elements that symbolized His upcoming actions on the cross – actions that are the ultimate selfless demonstration of love. And they're talking about how they want to be the greatest. There's something else that's just happened, that for whatever reason, Luke did not record. Only John has recorded for us the account of Jesus washing His disciples' feet.³

John 13:4-5 - "*(Jesus) rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*"

Then verses 12-16: "*When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you?' You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do*

³ Suggested by Michael Card, *Luke: The Gospel of Amazement* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2011), p. 240.

just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him."

Some Christian traditions like the Mennonites wash each other's feet when they celebrate communion. That's a beautiful, very literal understanding of what Jesus said there. I think the emphasis is on finding ways to serve others in every area of your life. Don't be like the world, Jesus said. Don't feel like you need to jockey for position and measure your worth by how you're better than everyone else. Your greatness will come in the next life - Jesus promised that they would all be rewarded for staying with Him in His trials, that they would sit on thrones in the kingdom. But they needed to understand the nature of greatness, the desire to serve. We are humble servants now because we will rule and reign with Him in eternity! If Jesus, who deserves all honor, glory and praise since He is the mighty Creator of the Universe, could humble Himself and serve and submit to the indignities of this life, then certainly we sinful creations can aim to do the same.

Conclusion

*"My body, which is given **for** you" and "this cup that is poured out **for** you" – Dale Davis has noted that the preposition "for" in these phrases can mean "on behalf of" or "for the benefit of," but it can also mean "in place of." Both meanings are intended – that Jesus giving His body and blood is of great benefits for His followers, but also that they were given in place of us.⁴ Jesus' death on the cross was a substitute for us, the Lamb slain. In Revelation chapter 5, there is a moment when a scroll with seven seals is brought out among the heavenly assembly. "And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it" (v. 3). And John, the author, began to weep until one of the elders said to him, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (v. 5). So everyone looks as a creature steps out. Which creature? It's a Lion, a great conquering King, right? No, John says, "I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" and He went and took the scroll and He opened the seals one by one. And the multitude of heaven cried out, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed your people for God, from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Jesus, the Lamb of God slain for you, is worthy of all honor and glory and blessing forever. And in Him, we are made worthy of eternal life and heaven. His blood covers us, He gave His life in our place.*

If you've been in church for any length of time, you've seen or participated in the Lord's Supper many times. Some churches celebrate it every week, some, like ours, monthly, others quarterly or even yearly. Jesus didn't say how often to celebrate it, but that as you do, you are to remember Him. There are other things people argue about with communion: can you dip the bread into the wine, (that's called intinction), or does that violate the Scriptures where Jesus separated them. There has long been a debate about how literally Christ meant "*This is my body*" – the Protestant Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin were split on that – Luther said that Jesus is physically present around the elements, Calvin said, "No, He is spiritually present." Sadly, there are a lot of things to argue about with the Lord's Supper, things that divide us. Some of those things are worth discussing and finding truth. But we should join in this sacrament looking for the ways that it unites all believers. 1 Corinthians 5:7- "*Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*" Just as the Israelites had been delivered from slavery to Pharaoh and Egypt, we have been delivered from the bondage of our sin and guilt. We don't celebrate the Passover anymore because it is no longer the greatest deliverance event in the history of Israel.

⁴ Dale Ralph Davis, *Luke 14-24: On the Road to Jerusalem* (Scotland: Christian Focus, 2021), p. 169.

➔ Transition to Communion

But the Lord's Supper is now the true commemoration of the greatest deliverance event in the history of Israel. Christ's death gives freedom to people of all nations, tribes, and tongues.

It's not enough to understand the meaning of the Lord's Supper. And it's not enough to simply take the Lord's Supper. We have to embrace Jesus personally by faith, to embrace the reality of His death for our sins, in order to receive the blessings that the elements represent.

Benediction

Jude 24-25 – *“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”*