

Jesu Juva

“Eating the Passover”

Text: Mark 14:12-26; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

When He woke that Thursday morning (LSB #445), Jesus knew how the day would end. He knew that in mere hours He would be betrayed, He would be arrested, and then the next day, the day the Passover lambs were slain, it would be His blood poured out, His life given, to rescue not a nation but a world from death. He knew and He would go. And though we're not told, I would not at all be surprised if Jesus arose that morning early, before the sun came up, and went off by Himself to pray, as we hear so often was His custom.

When the disciples woke that Thursday morning, what did they expect? Surely, not that! Probably what we heard from St. Mark: to begin preparations to eat the Passover. *Notice the verb used there.* They did not ask where they would *celebrate* the Passover, or *remember* the Passover, but where they would *eat the Passover*.

Isn't that strange? The Passover was an event that had taken place some 1,500 years before this. And it was *an event*. It was when lambs were slain, their blood smeared on the door frames of the houses of the people of Israel to protect them from the angel of death that would pass through Egypt that night and execute the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn of every man and beast not protected by the blood and so *passed over*, and the lamb then eaten in the midst of all that in anticipation of their leaving Egypt that very day. All of that was what the Passover was and what they remembered every year. So wouldn't it have been better to ask where they would *keep* the Passover and *eat* the lamb? Maybe that's what they meant . . .

But no, words mean something. And it was a common way of speaking of the Passover, to eat it, as if the whole event of the Passover was condensed down into this eating. And in a way, it was. For you couldn't keep the Passover without the eating of the lamb. The flesh and blood of the lamb was central. And by eating the Passover, *they participated in it*. It was as if they were there. It was the way of becoming united with the ones who were there, the ones who went before them. It was much more than a mere remembrance or celebration. From its beginning in Egypt down to that day, the Passover is never what they did but always what God did and which became theirs when they ate the Passover.

So when He woke that Thursday morning, Jesus knew that by the end of that day there would be a new Passover. A new lamb would be slain whose blood would protect not just the people of Israel, but all people. And this Passover too would be eaten. And *so as they*

were eating, Mark said - not an insignificant detail - Jesus *took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a 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."*

How strange those words must have sounded to the twelve reclining at the table that Thursday *evening*. They surely did not yet understand what Jesus was doing and how a *new* Passover was being accomplished. But they soon would. When after His resurrection, Jesus would open their minds and explain the Scriptures to them (Luke 24:45); how from first to last, they were all about Him, they all pointed to Him and foreshadowed His work. And when He got to Exodus and the Passover and put that piece into the one great Messianic puzzle that was being assembled from all throughout the Old Testament, I wish I could have seen the look on their faces! The eating, the blood, the lamb, the saving from death, the new life. It was all pointing to Jesus all along.

But it wasn't just a *new* Passover they were now eating, but a *greater* one with a greater lamb. The death of the first born Son of God for the life of the world. Rescue from sin, death, and the power of the devil. New life not in a land of milk and honey, but with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

And just like the first Passover, this new Passover is one *to eat*, and greater - now also *to drink*. The Body and Blood of the Lamb of God, given to us by the power of His Word, now in bread and wine. And as St. Paul explained, just like the first Passover, by this eating and drinking, it is our *participation* in what Jesus' flesh and blood has done for us. We pass over from death to life with our Saviour. It is as if the whole event of His Passover is condensed down into this eating and drinking. Indeed it is. Here you receive all that He has done **for you**.

Which is good, for how often, when left to ourselves, do we not pass over sin but choose to remain in it and indulge in its feast of death? How we need this new and greater Passover, perhaps even more they did in Egypt.

And as a greater Passover, this isn't one we eat just once a year, like the first one. Now, it is often. No minimum, no maximum, as often as you need the forgiveness and life of your Saviour, it is here for you. He promised. For that's what a covenant is - a promise. The promise of God to you: that just as Jesus united Himself to us in His incarnation, so He unites you to Himself in His communion. And in so doing, we are united with all who have gone before us in the faith. United in Christ as one body, one Church, that lives now and will live forever.

When you woke that Thursday morning, Savior, teacher, faithful friend . . . What was there that you could give them that would never be outspent, what great gift that would outlive them, what last will and testament (LSB #445 vs. 1, 3)? This gift. That the Church

throughout the ages gather to eat the new Passover. Though in many places and many times, some in great cathedrals and some in humble homes, some very young and some very old, we are all really eating at one table, His table, the Lord's table. His meal, His Passover, His Body and Blood. Receiving together as one His forgiveness, life, and salvation, until we finally pass over with Him from this life to the next, and the never-ending joy of the feast there that has no end.

So when you woke *this Thursday morning*, what did you expect?

Come eat, come drink, the Body and Blood of your Passover Lamb. The Lamb of God who on that *Friday* morning took away your sin, and the sin of the world.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.