

MAUNDY THURSDAY, Mark 14:12-26

Twelve men entered the Upper Room with Jesus for an intimate dinner together. Eleven would look back at the time as a time of powerful redemption. They would remember it as a time of healing, fellowship, and communion. The twelfth would look back with regret. Eleven men would break bread and share the cup becoming some of the most honored men in history. Eleven were redeemed, forgiven, and delivered from their sin. But the twelfth man walked away unforgiven and unable to repent.

Why did the eleven come away forgiven and renewed and not the twelfth? Because they never forgot. They never forgot that the bread broken that night in the Upper Room, was broken for them. They never forgot that the cup they all drank from that night was the cup of redemption.

When they held that bread in their hands, when they drank of that cup, they knew something. They knew that in spite of their imperfections, in spite of their sin, in spite of their seeming inability to be what they knew they should be; they were redeemed. As the Hebrews in Egypt experienced death passing over them on the very first Passover, death would also pass over the eleven. They would be redeemed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You and I are like the eleven. Through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ death also passes over us and we are given new spiritual life.

In the book of Exodus chapter 12, the tenth and last plague fell upon Egypt. Death passed over the houses of those who were covered by the blood of the lamb. The joy of redemption followed each household that was being released from captivity. But death entered the houses of those not covered by the blood of the lamb. They had no redemption. They had only mourning and regret. Death passed over the redeemed, and in the New Covenant given to us by Jesus, again death passes over the redeemed.

Here in Mark chapter 14:12-26 we see the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Here Jesus celebrates the Passover meal with his disciples in what would be his last meal. With this brief description Mark impresses upon us the life changing significance of Jesus sacrifice for us. We are to never to forget His sacrifice, for there is power in the blood of Christ. Today, this very day, there is healing. There is forgiveness. There is a fresh start. There is a placing aside of all those failures. All those sins. All those things that haunt us. All by the power of the blood of Jesus.

By the blood of Jesus death has passed over you. It has been rendered harmless in the new Passover. As believers we experience eternal life in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Why? Because the blood of Jesus' death has passed over us.

At this time, the custom was that the Passover meal began after sunset. It could last until midnight. It had to be eaten within the city of Jerusalem. Jesus had been staying outside of Jerusalem at night, but on this night, He enters the city after the twelve for what would be his last meal.

There was sure to be a celebratory mood with the disciples as they entered the room. The celebration of Passover was always marked by excitement and hope. Excitement and hope that God's intervention would take place once again. But, on this night, the Passover of Passovers, Jesus himself would accomplish the Passover in himself. He would permanently have death pass over all those who are redeemed.

This story of redemption naturally leads to praise thanking God for what He had done in the past for Israel. It also led to praise in expectation for the future redemption of the people of God. Little did they know that their future redemption was unfolding right before their eyes.

But Jesus breaks the festive mood in verse 18 **"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."** Imagine their shock. What Jesus said must have seemed so random, so out of context. But it wasn't out of context. Jesus was referring to Psa. 41:9 **"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."**

Notice, there is no vindictiveness here. It is simply a powerful statement of fact.

"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me." Jesus' generosity in hosting the meal is in contrast with the hypocrisy of a traitor. Jesus then pronounces woe upon the traitor. **It would be better for him if he'd not been born.** What is going through the mind of Judas? Why does Judas continue with his sin? Why doesn't he comprehend the horror of what he is doing? Why doesn't he seek a way out, a reversal, redemption...why? Why does he go through with the betrayal of Jesus? His name has become synonymous with betrayal of the worst kind. Judas could have turned to Jesus Christ at any time. He could have turned that night at the table into a time of redemption for Him. But he didn't.

Have you ever thought of how different things would be if Judas had asked that night for forgiveness? If he had repented of what he was about to do? But he didn't. He could have repented at any time thereafter. In the garden. At the cross but he didn't. If he had, he would have received forgiveness. He would have heard Jesus to say to him, "Judas there is forgiveness for all who come to me." He would have heard Jesus say to him that he was worth redeeming. That we all are. That there is none too fallen. None too far. None beyond the grace of God. He would have been assured that he was worthy of redemption. Worthy of the blood of the lamb. Worthy of the bread of life. Don't ever forget – you are worthy.

We are worthy, but not because of what we have done. We are worthy, not because of our birth. We are worthy, not because of some spirituality we can produce by ourselves. NO, we are worthy, because Jesus Christ has deemed us worthy. By receiving Him as our Lord and Savior we become part of those who are saved. Part of His kingdom. Jesus doesn't want us to forget that our worthiness is in Him. So, He institutes the Lord's Supper. When we receive the bread, we are also receiving His body. When we receive the cup, we are also receiving His blood. With this cup, with this bread, we are called to remember the great atoning sacrifice of Christ for us.

When Jesus speaks of the bread being his body, He is speaking of more than just His physical body. He is speaking of his whole person. He is saying "I am myself this bread." The disciples each take the bread from the hand of Jesus. As certainly as they receive the bread from Jesus, Jesus will certainly be with them forever – in spite of his death. So, Jesus anticipates His resurrection.

Jesus relates the cup of wine to the renewal of God's covenant with His people. Jesus is referring to Ex. 24:6-8 **"Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."**

Moses then took the blood. He sprinkled it on the people. He said, **"This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."**

Jesus speaks of His blood as sealing a new covenant just as the blood that Moses sprinkled sealed the covenant between God and His people at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. The first great deliverance event.

Moses used the blood of a sacrificial animal. But here Jesus tells us that He Himself is the sacrifice. His blood is the blood that seals the new covenant. The new agreement. The allusion to Jesus' violent death is unmistakable. His blood will flow. His blood will be poured out. The cup represents a covenant- a new covenant- that is a promise made to us from Jesus Himself. It is an agreement that Jesus makes with all those who follow Him. It is the promise of everlasting salvation for all those who believe.

The disciples partake of the cup. They do so though the sacrifice has not yet happened. The death of Jesus has not yet occurred, but it will. Later, the disciples will celebrate this meal with others, and they will recall the promise. They will remember and they will pass on that memory. You're worthy in the eyes of Christ. You're redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

The cup represents not only a blood sacrifice, it also offers the assurance that the new order is inaugurated through Jesus' death. We see this in Jeremiah 31:31-33, **"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,"** declares the LORD. **"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,"** declares the LORD. **"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."**

The cup is a pledge that when the people of God meet in table fellowship God is present and able to achieve salvation. Christ Himself is present in this meal we're about to receive. The Bread and the Cup represent the promise of Jesus Christ to be present with those who believe the promise of salvation, signed in blood.

But the promise is deeper. The promise given by Jesus not only looks to what has been done. It also looks forward to the future. To a time of great celebration and fellowship. The disciples partake of the cup, though the sacrifice has not yet happened, the death of Jesus has not yet occurred, but it will. Later, the disciples will celebrate this meal with others, and they will recall the promise. They will remember and they will pass on that memory. You're worthy in the eyes of Christ. You're redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

The cup represents not only a blood sacrifice, but it also offers assurance of hope that the new order is inaugurated through Jesus' death.

Twelve men entered the Upper Room with Jesus. Eleven men would look back at the time as a time of powerful redemption. As a time of healing and communion. One man would look back with regret. After all was said and done, he could have repented. He could have come back to Jesus. He could have confessed his sin. If he had he would have heard the words: Judas, you are worthy. Receive me into yourself.