

The Lord's Supper

Mark 14:12-26

Key Verse: 14:24

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.”

In the last passage we learned the beautiful story of a woman who poured her alabaster jar of perfume on Jesus. She lavished upon Jesus what was most precious to her. Some people criticized her harshly. However, Jesus accepted her act as a beautiful thing. Jesus said it would be told, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, in memory of her. Isn't this beautiful? Actually there are many beautiful stories of love in the Bible and the world. In the midst of the terrible tragedy at NIU, there is a beautiful story. One young man, when confronted by the gunman, placed his own body between the gunman and his fiance. He was wounded, but his fiance lived. His sacrificial love for her is a beautiful thing. Do you know what is the most beautiful thing? It is the love of Jesus. This passage teaches us the love of Jesus who shed his blood to make a covenant with us.

I. Preparation to celebrate the Passover (12-16)

It was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb. The Passover was celebrated by the whole nation of Israel to commemorate their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. They had been hopeless and powerless to get free. Then God delivered them by his almighty hand. Especially, the Israelites were saved by the blood of the lamb. Here we learn the power of the blood of the lamb.

To commemorate the Passover, extensive preparations were made. At the center of preparation, each family had to offer a sacrifice lamb. Jesus did not have his human family with him, but he would celebrate the Passover with his spiritual family, his disciples. This Passover was to be a very special one. Jesus would offer his own life as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus wanted to explain this to his disciples.

However, to Jesus' disciples, it must have seemed like just another Passover. They asked Jesus where they should go and make preparations. Jesus sent two of them, with detailed instructions that would lead them to the place he had chosen without revealing the location in advance (13-15). In this way, Jesus kept the location hidden from Judas Iscariot, who was looking for an opportunity to hand him over (11). Jesus also helped his two disciples, Peter and John (Lk 22:8), to practice obedience to his words. They could have been upset, asking, “Why do you treat us like children?” Instead, they simply obeyed. Then they found things just as Jesus had told them and experienced the power of God to prepare successfully.

We Christians celebrate Easter to experience the power of the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection. We cannot take this lightly or casually. We must prepare with all our hearts. We must pray for Jesus' help to overcome Satan's hindrance. We must humbly obey the word of Jesus, especially as we prepare messages. In the same way, we must prepare the Purdue Conference with prayer and obedience. As Dr. John Jun has given us the direction, we must offer 3,000 times of united prayer and bring 3,000 attendants. When we prepare well, God will surely bless this conference.

II. The meaning of Jesus' death (17-26)

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me" (17-18). Jesus amazes us here. Jesus knew his betrayer beforehand. In history, so often a most trusted one's betrayal shocks a powerful leader. Julius Caesar was shocked by Brutus' betrayal. As Caesar lay dying, he said, "You, too, Brutus?" General George Washington was shocked by the betrayal of one of his most able and trusted generals, Benedict Arnold. Stalin was killed by his close aide. President Park of Korea was assassinated by a trusted fellow worker. None of these men expected the betrayal that came through a trusted one. However, Jesus knew that Judas, his trusted disciple, would betray him before it happened.

If Jesus was like Edmond Dantes in "The Count of Monte Cristo," he would exact vengeance on his betrayer slowly, steadily and completely. Yet Jesus was different. Jesus actually protected the betrayer's identity, though this distressed the other disciples. Jesus warned him seriously, saying, "But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born" (21b). Jesus had great compassion on Judas' soul. Jesus grieved over him and urged him to repent his sin. If we feel betrayed or hated by someone else, we usually react emotionally. We get upset and want to bring about justice. However, Jesus had compassion on the betrayer. We must learn Jesus' love. It is not easy, but that is what Jesus did.

When Jesus foretold his betrayal, he emphasized that it would happen just as it was written about the Son of Man, that is, according to the Scriptures. It was very important for the other disciples to realize this. Otherwise, when it happened they could be shocked. They could misunderstand that Jesus' death on the cross was a failure. It was not a failure. Jesus' betrayal and death on the cross precisely fulfilled God's will. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Muslims and Moonies say that Jesus' death was a failure. But it was not a failure; it was the will of God.

According to John's gospel, when Judas felt that his betrayal was exposed, he went out, and it was night (Jn 13:30). Then Jesus shared with his disciples the real meaning of the Passover. Of course, they had celebrated the Passover annually from birth. They knew the historical meaning of eating the bread and drinking the cup. But Jesus wanted to teach them that it found ultimate fulfillment in his death on the cross. Though hundreds of thousands, and even millions of lambs had been offered in sacrifice, they could not bring about man's salvation from sin and Satan. Animals have insufficient value to atone for man's sins. The Passover lamb was merely a shadow of the coming Christ. Only the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, can truly solve man's sin problem.

Still, the Passover motif helps us understand the meaning of Jesus' sacrifice. As the Israelites ate the flesh of the lamb to nourish their bodies for pilgrimage, Jesus offered his body in the form of bread to his disciples. Look at verse 22. "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.'" Jesus said in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." When we feed on Jesus' body, our souls are truly satisfied and we find the strength to live as holy pilgrims on earth. Moreover, just as the blood of the Passover lamb was central to deliverance from bondage in Egypt, so the blood of Christ is central to man's salvation from sin and Satan. Let's read verses 23-24. "Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them." Matthew 26:28 adds, "for the forgiveness of sins." This is Jesus' main point. Let's consider what the blood of Christ does for mankind.

First, the grace of the blood of Christ. Without Christ, men are slaves of sin and Satan, just as the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. Though we try hard to improve, we cannot get out of the grip of bad habits and wretched behavior. But the blood of Christ has power to set us free from that bondage. Colossians 1:13-14 say, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Just as God overpowered Pharaoh to deliver the Israelites, Christ overpowers sin and Satan and delivers us from the dominion of darkness. Christ forgives us and gives us a new life as children of God. These days many are suffering from various addictions: drugs, food, sex, the Internet, self-pity, and so on. They cannot escape no matter how hard they try. Even though they fail miserably in school or at work, they cannot change themselves. Even though they break relationships with people they love deeply, they cannot change. But Jesus has the power to break the chains of addiction and set us free. Romans 3:23-25a say, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood." In Jesus we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. We can come out of the darkness and into his wonderful light.

Second, the power of the blood of Christ. Though we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, spiritual growth is not automatic. We need Jesus continually for the power to live as his people. Though we really don't want to, we fall into the power of sin. We become self-centered; we complain; we fall into sinful desires. We lose self-control and find that we are again slaves of sin. What can we do? 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:7 says, "...the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." This restores our relationship with God and we can grow in his image.

Still, our enemy, the devil, does not leave us alone. He tries hard to make us stumble through temptation. Because we are sinners, we are weak. However, Jesus truly understands us and has the power to help us. Hebrews 4:15-16 say, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Third, the new covenant in Jesus' blood. After the Israelites had been redeemed from slavery in Egypt, God brought them to Mount Sinai and made a covenant with them. This covenant was sealed with blood (Ex 24:8). As long as the Israelites obeyed God fully, they could maintain the blessing of living in the promised land as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The problem was that they failed to keep this covenant due to their sinful nature.

Now Jesus, according to God's will and plan, is making a new covenant in his blood with his disciples. It is different from the old covenant. Jeremiah 31:33,34 says, in part, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts...For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." This new covenant is based on a transformation in the inner person. God changes the minds and hearts of his people to empower them to live according to his law. God has a direct and personal relationship with each one of them and dwells in their hearts by his power. When we are changed in this way, we are happy to serve God willingly and voluntarily from the heart. We want to love God passionately, as God has loved us. Ezekiel 36:26,27 explains further. It says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws." God promises to give us the Holy Spirit to empower us to live by his law. We are weak; but the Holy Spirit is powerful. We are foolish, but the Holy Spirit gives God's wisdom. We cannot live up to God's law in our own strength. But when we receive the Holy Spirit, he enables us to love and obey God naturally. The Holy Spirit moves us in all joy and peace to follow God's direction and obey his words.

The role of Jesus' blood is very significant in the new covenant. God knows our weaknesses very well. God sent his one and only Son Jesus as the Lamb of God to shed his blood for the sin of the world. Through his blood we have forgiveness, deliverance from darkness, purification, and a new covenant relationship that restores paradise in our souls. Jesus offers his blood for each one of us to establish a new covenant relationship with him.

We need this covenant. We have a desire to serve God, but lack the ability or power. We become enthusiastic at conferences and say, "I want to serve God in holiness and righteousness." But afterward, we say, "Oh. I want to serve God, I really do; but I just can't." Jesus understands. That is why he is offering us a new covenant in his blood. When we accept it, the power of his blood works in our hearts gradually to change us into his servants. He is faithful to keep this covenant, even though we fall down again and again. He simply asks us to receive this covenant by faith and by his grace.

Look at verse 25. "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." Jesus' vision was fixed on the kingdom of God. Humanly speaking, this seems impossible. In just a few hours he would be betrayed and condemned. But when Jesus knew the clear meaning of his suffering and death, he had hope. He could see his resurrection. He could see his ascension into heaven and sitting at God's right hand until everything was put under his feet. He could see the victory of God's kingdom. Jesus planted this hope in his disciples. Those who have a blood covenant with Jesus can have heavenly vision all the time. They can be victorious all the time. So Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before going out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus was not marching out to humiliation, but to victory that would last forever. Jesus shares this glorious victory with his new covenant people.

May God bless each one of us today to accept the new covenant in Jesus' blood by faith as we celebrate holy communion.