

Palm Sunday, April 13th, 2025



Part 3: "The Last Supper"
Matthew 26:17-30; John 13:1-35

Good morning and welcome to the Upper Room. Turn to the gospel of John chapter 13. This morning, we want to take you back 2,000 years ago to Jesus' last night on earth that he shared with his closest followers.

I want to remind you that Jesus is a much present with us in this service as he was in that upper room in Jerusalem. He may not be here in body, but there's no doubt He's with us in Spirit and He wants to meet each of us where we are and draw us close to Himself in fellowship and in love.

Now if you haven't been here in the last few Sundays, we've been taking a closer look at Jesus' last days during the last week of His life. Church tradition calls that week, Holy Week, and next to Creation Week in Genesis, it's the second most important week in the history of the world.

A third of the content of the 4 gospels in the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are dedicated to this last week when Jesus gave a lot of His most important teaching, and then surrendered his life to die on the cross for the sins of the world and rise again 3 days later.

So far, we've examined what took place on Palm Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week, and this morning we're taking a closer look at what occurred on Thursday. Next Sunday we'll focus on Friday when Jesus was crucified, thru Sunday, known as Resurrection Sunday.

So this morning we're going to intertwine together 2 of the passages in the gospels that provide some of the events of the Last Supper. Again, time doesn't allow us to cover everything that the gospels record that occurred on Thursday night of Holy Week.

The time Jesus spent with the disciples in the upper room on Thursday was somewhere in the neighborhood of 6 hours beginning early in the evening and right through midnight, when as the clock rolled over into Friday...

Jesus was with the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane when Judas came with the temple guards and betrayed him with a kiss.

We've put a little more detailed timeline for you today included with your notes and should you desire, and I encourage you to do this, you can go home and read the various passages of the gospels to get a more complete picture of everything that occurred during Holy Week and at the Last Supper.

Let's begin our time together in the Upper Room by figuring out how we got here, how the disciples ended up in a home in Jerusalem where they'd never been before. READ Matt. 26:17-20.

We're going to focus on 3 elements of the Last Supper this morning and the first one can be summed up this way...

(Slide) THURSDAY – The Last Supper

1. Jesus teaches and models the meaning of true Greatness – John 13:1-17

As the disciples were gathered together in the upper room that evening, we won't look at it right now, but Luke 22 records that the disciples got in an argument.

Apparently one of the disciples had recently purchased and was proudly wearing a new brand-name outfit and the other disciples were arguing why he didn't get one from the local Good-will store, since it would have been a better use of their limited resources. 😊

As silly as that sounds, reality is, it was worse than that. The disciples were indeed arguing, but over something much more petty: they were arguing over which one of them would be the greatest in the eyes of God.

Jesus dearly loved His disciples, and it grieved His heart that with all the important things happening and about to happen, the most important thing they could think about was themselves.

They certainly didn't understand what was important to Him and His Father, nor did they understand how God looks at greatness. So Jesus decides to not only show them how much He loved them, but also show them what real love looks like, what real greatness entails.

**LISTEN AND WATCH AS I READ WHAT JOHN DESCRIBES IN HIS GOSPEL
(FORREST AND CONNER WASHING FEET)**

READ John 13:1-17.

In those days in Jerusalem, households such as the one the disciples were in, would have a housekeeper who when guests arrived would stoop and wash the dirty feet of all the guests first before they moved about the house.

For whatever reason, this household's keeper was somewhere else, and the disciples' feet didn't get washed. The disciples themselves were either too busy or too proud to stop and wash their own feet.

So as the disciples are gathering around the table, guess what's beginning to take over the room? The smell of dirty, sweaty feet! Anyone know what I'm talking about? (every family has someone who has smelly feet)

And think about this: This was 2,000 years ago. The city of Jerusalem was overcrowded with an estimated quarter million sheep and other assorted animals...

And 1 to 2 million people with no septic or sewer systems like we have today. The sandals they wore would easily pick up any unwanted sources of smells on the dusty roadways.

So Jesus has heard what the disciples are talking about and he sees their unwashed feet, and He uses the entire situation as an impromptu classroom where He can teach them all (and us), some important lessons.

Jesus picks up a towel and some water and begins washing the feet of His disciples. They are immediately aghast at what He's doing. The Son of God is washing their dirty feet!!! They are humiliated, humbled, and challenged all at the same time.

Jesus tells them and He shows them, that greatness isn't seeking the limelight, the spotlight, or the applause of others. True greatness is found in having of humble spirit of sacrificial service done to and for others.

And He tells them to follow His example. He wants His followers to be humble servants to others, just like He served them. That's the point of Jesus' actions and His teaching.

Remember the TV Show, Dirty Jobs?

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Some of the grossest places you could ever think of is where Mike Rowe ended up. And similarly, on the last full day of his life here on earth before His crucifixion, Jesus found Himself in a humbling situation that revealed His true heart of love and humility.

Today, we don't walk around on dirty, dusty, stinky roads in sandals like they did 2,000 years ago. So for me to say to you that Jesus wants you to go out this week and literally wash someone's feet would be pointless.

But I am saying to all of us today: Go out this week and be like Jesus and humbly serve others. Just as Jesus willingly stepped into one of the worst of the Dirty Jobs of His day, He wants us to be willing to step into the worst of the dirty jobs of our day, and exemplify the true humility and love of Jesus, by serving others.

Maybe that means...

- Picking up your neighbor's dogs piles of you-know-what that lie around his yard
- Being willing to serve an elderly neighbor who can't do what he or she used to do anymore
- Stepping into the worst scenario you could think of and putting up with the inconvenience and serving someone even if it costs you
- Volunteering to serve in our God Cares Ministry – I'm sure our folks could use the help – and serve once or twice a month in one of the Senior Care facilities in our community
- Stepping out of your comfort zone and finding a way to serve someone who would least expect it

Fellowship, the question is, am I willing, are you willing, are WE willing, to spread the fame of Jesus throughout our community by being willing to do the dirtiest jobs in humble service to others?

Here's what Jesus taught His disciples that last night and what He's teaching us today...

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Application Principle:

True greatness is found in humble, sacrificial service for others

Now turn over to Matthew 26 where there's another item of business that Jesus took care of at the Last Supper...

(Slide) THURSDAY – The Last Supper

**2. Jesus transformed the last Passover into the first communion –
Matt. 26:20-30**

READ Matt. 26:19-20

Let's start by answering the question, What is the Passover? (Notes)

The Passover was the first feast of the Jewish calendar held every year on the 14th day of the first month (Leviticus 23:5). It commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt with the sacrifice of a spotless lamb (See Exodus 12).

The Passover observance was immediately followed by a feast called The Feast of Unleavened Bread. (Notes)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6) was a weeklong event that begin on the 15th day of the first month. The main feature of this feast was the absence of leaven (a picture of sin) in Israel's houses which signifies God's people being separated and holy.

Before the celebration of the Passover, each family was to select a spotless lamb and take it to the priests where it would be killed, its blood drained, and then they would return home, roast it and eat it.

So when Jesus gathered his disciples in this upper room, they were coming together to eat a roasted lamb which had been slain by one of the priests at the temple there in Jerusalem.

Now notice again what Jesus says in verse 18 - "My appointed time is near." This is a very significant statement. On several other occasions Jesus had told His disciples that His time had not yet come. But this time it was different.

The purpose for why Jesus had come into the world in the first place was about to unfold. Jesus had one remaining evening left to spend with His disciples. And together they were going to spend it keeping the Passover.

How fitting this was because the events of this last evening together would usher in the ultimate culmination of everything that all the other Passovers throughout the centuries had been looking forward to.

The true Lamb of God was about to be sacrificed fulfilling the true meaning of what the Passover was all about.

What is not mentioned here in Matthew's account is that part of the Passover celebration would be a ceremonial washing to cleanse oneself before eating. They would wash their hands and feet with water. It was not only for physical cleansing but also symbolized spiritual cleansing.

READ Matt. 26:21-25.

This announcement by Jesus no doubt cast a shadow on the evening. But we have to remember that the betrayal of Jesus was part of God's plan just like all the other details of His last week.

Judas' betrayal of Jesus resulted in Jesus dying for the sins of the world. So God used this negative act to bring glory to himself. Of course, that doesn't let Judas off the hook. Judas willingly betrayed Jesus and he soon died and is suffering in hell because of it.

From this low point in the evening, and with Judas the betrayer out from among them, Jesus instituted an all-new observance for His people. When Jesus and His disciples observed the Passover that night, they were observing the very last one.

For over 1500 years, since the days of Moses, the Jewish people had observed the Passover. Now that Jesus was about to become the once and for all Passover lamb himself, for the sins of the whole world, the observance of the Passover as the Jewish people knew was now at an end.

The Passover celebration had always pointed people to look to the future when the Messiah would come. Now, with the events that we're reading here in chapter 26, the Passover forever looks backward at what Christ did on the cross.

Read verses 26-29.

Some denominations teach a doctrine called Transubstantiation. It means that somehow in a mystical fashion, when you eat the bread and drink the cup, that the bread actually becomes the flesh of Christ, and the juice actually becomes the blood of Christ.

But it is obvious here from Jesus words that these are meant to be symbols only. Jesus didn't intend for us to perpetually re-sacrifice His body every time we observe communion together.

Notice again what Jesus said in verse 28. The shedding of the lamb's blood was an important aspect of the Passover. It is only by the blood that the sins of the people were covered and forgiven. Why blood? Because blood represents life - Lev. 17:11.

So it is that when Jesus died on the cross, He shed His blood - He gave His life. A life was needed to pay the death penalty for our sins. And His blood is what was necessary to cover our sins. Hebrews 9:22.

Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that in a just a few hours from this time, when they saw Him bleeding on the cross, he wasn't just some unfortunate teacher who was betrayed by one of his closest friends.

He was fulfilling the plan of God the Father as the Lamb of God - the great Passover Lamb - who takes away the sins of the world. The juice that we're going to drink together is a perpetual reminder of this truth for all believers of all time.

Later that night in the upper room, John's gospel records that Jesus said these words to his disciples... "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Since Jesus is the only one who could become our substitute and pay the price for our sin with His own blood, He is therefore the only one who can forgive us of our sin and give us eternal life –

and that's the principle we all need to pay close attention to...

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Application Principle:

Only by putting one's faith in Jesus and repenting of one's sin, asking Him to forgive and save you from sin's penalty (death), can anyone receive salvation and eternal life in heaven.

Have you put your faith in Jesus – the Lamb of God who died so you could have your sins forgiven? If not, we're going to give you the opportunity to do that in a few moments.

Now before we partake of communion together, there's one more key teaching of Jesus that I want us to take note of in the gospel record. After the preparations were made for observing the Passover,

And after Jesus washed the disciples' feet and taught His disciples about true humble service, and after Judas the betrayer left the Upper Room, and after Jesus transformed the Old Testament Passover into the New Testament celebration of Communion as an ordinance of the church...

He pinpointed another important spiritual truth He wanted them to know and remember...

(Slide) THURSDAY – The Last Supper

3. Jesus established a New Command – John 13:34-35

Turn over to John's Gospel – READ John 13:34-35

Why is this “new”? Doesn't the Old Testament teach that we should love each other? Yes, it does, but Jesus ups the standard of our love by saying that He wants our love to be like His love. “As I have loved you” he says.

Jesus had already shown His love for His disciples by washing their dirty feet. That was definitely upping His love game and example for us. But less than 24 hours after Jesus gave this teaching to His disciples, He upped it again, when He gave His life and died on the cross for them and for us.

And it's that standard of love that Jesus wants us to have for one another – a love that is willing to serve each other, even to the extent that we would be willing to pay the highest price - the giving of our very lives - for the welfare of each other.

And when we love each other with Christ-like love, this Jesus kind of love for one another will stand out in this dark and sinful world we're living in, and it will serve as a beacon of light and hope, to what real love is, and where real love comes from – Jesus Christ.

The world will know we're disciples of Jesus, when we love each other, the way He loves us. And this is where the term Maundy Thursday comes in.

The word Maundy in Latin means “command” and it’s referring to this command Jesus gave to His disciples on the night of the Last Supper – and to all His followers including us this morning.

In the first few centuries after Jesus came, the disciples of Jesus were known for their love for others. In fact, it was so obvious to everyone, that a saying circulated across the Roman empire: “Behold, how they love one another.”

The early believers’ love for each other was pronounced, it was intentional, it was active, it was sacrificial, it was Jesus-like. And because they loved that way, it drew the attention of the world – even those who were their enemies.

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Application Principle:

**The greatest testimony the church can give to the world,
is our Christ-like love for each other.**

Fellowship, the Lord wants us to carry on the sacrificial love the early church had for each other as a testimony to the world of our Lord Jesus. Fellowship, let’s love each other like Jesus loves us.