

## The Eternal Passover That Jesus Desired to Eat

Maundy Thurs. – 04/17/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 22:14-23 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 15-16, **“And He said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’”**

### **Introduction**

- ✘ Thus far, during this season of Lent, both myself and the other pastors that you heard in our midweek services, have tried to be realistic as we have learned together to trust our God.
  - ➔ Realistic, that is, 1) regarding the evil that betrayed and condemned and crucified Jesus long ago, and 2) realistic regarding the evil in our world, and even in our own lives today.
- ✘ As believers in Christ, whenever we face evil, we have learned to trust in our God and the plan that He carried out in His Son, Jesus. That trust means that we can say to Satan; to the world; and even to the person staring back at us in the mirror, *“You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.”*
  - ➔ But, this evening’s service takes a bit of a break from that action. Why? because of the gift that our Lord Jesus created on that night long ago in the upper room. This, you see, is not a night to be somber, but to be quietly joyful. It is a night to marvel at what happened first of all when Jesus ate the Passover meal with His apostles; and then to marvel, as well, at the new gift that He has caused to come down through the ages to us here tonight.
- ✘ In verse 15, Jesus said to them that night, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” Now, when Jesus says, “this Passover” He is speaking of a particular ritual that happened at that particular moment in history; there in Jerusalem.
  - ➔ But, I want to suggest to you – and I’ll explain this as we go along – that it was, at the same time, an eternal Passover that night. By “eternal” I mean that it was not isolated, disconnected, alone, or even limited. That Passover gathered up and brought to fulfillment so many things from the past that until that night, had all been impossible to comprehend.
  - ➔ It was impossible to comprehend because the event in our Gospel Reading tonight was the most significant “present moment” in all of this world’s entire history. Yes, history was turning a corner that very night; a corner that put in place a gift from Jesus that would last up to this very night here, and even continue until the day Jesus returns in His final glory.
- ✘ I know that could sound like an exaggeration, but let’s consider together the past, present and future implications of what happened there on the night when Jesus was betrayed; there in “The Eternal Passover that Jesus Desired to Eat.”

### **I. The Past**

- ✘ It’s not hard, as we listen to the text, to hear clear allusions to the past there in the upper room that night. According to the way our calendar keeps track, Luke is describing the events that took place around the year 30 AD, some 1400 years after the very first Passover took place.
  - ➔ To put that in perspective, that’s about six times longer than the United States has existed. And ever since that first Passover with Moses and Pharaoh and the ten plagues and God’s rescue, every Passover since had been pointing forward to this one night; to this eternal Passover that Jesus desired to eat.
- ✘ So, let’s do a quick review: The descendants of Jacob, whose name God changed to “Israel,” had become a nation; 12 tribes. They were enslaved by Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. If you asked the average man on the street how the Egyptians could do this, he would say, “The

Egyptian gods are stronger than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” We know that the true God changed that perception. As the blood of lambs marked the Israelite’s homes, the angel of death “passed over” them. Then with an outstretched arm God brought the Israelites out of slavery, to the shore of the Red Sea, dividing the waters so that they could pass through on dry ground, before quickly drowning the Egyptians in that same sea.

➔ The Passover meal began as a remembrance of that gift of new life; an event that God told the people they were to remember throughout the centuries.

- ✘ But they didn’t always remember very well; their history was up and down, for sure. Things progressed, in fact, to the point that they just plain broke their covenant with God.

➔ He was eager and willing to be their God. But they wanted to play all sides of the “god” spectrum. They wanted be His people at the same time that they worshipped the pagan Baals, and the Canaanite idol Molech, as well as other false gods from the nations around them. But that kind of smorgasbord faith doesn’t fly with Yahweh, the one true God. He allows no rivals, since all of the others are not even real. So, Israel broke the covenant.

- ✘ Now in hindsight, we see that God always planned that His first covenant would eventually point forward to something greater. And so, that night in the upper room, with sin and evil all around and with quarreling disciples seated with their master, the past came rushing up to them to cry out, “How long, O Lord? How long until You deliver us again? How long will Your people wander? When, Lord, will You do a new thing!”

## II. The “present” of our text.

- ✘ And Jesus’ answer was, “Tonight. Right now, in the present!” You see, on that night, long ago, Jesus confronted not only the past of His people Israel, but the slavery of all of the so-called “gods” throughout the world and even Satan himself.

➔ Jesus faced that slavery, took hold of it, and did not let go; freeing sinners of all the eras and inviting them all to the table. Past and present now came together in the eternal Passover that Jesus desired to eat – then and there; in that present moment.

- ✘ So, it’s no exaggeration to say that that evening, along with the events that followed in the next 60 hours, were the turning point in all of human history. Jesus embraced and addressed the old, even as He created something new; not entirely new. But that something connected to the old, was now larger, stronger and more beautifully “renewed” than what was before.

➔ Here, in the upper room, Jesus begins that turning point in history with the old ritual that His disciples certainly had known their entire lives. He takes a cup that is part of the Passover ceremony, and He blesses it; asking them to divide it among themselves. And then he says in verse 18, “That’s it. I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes,” referring to the great and last day of His return.

- ✘ Then, turning from the old, Jesus gives them something new – really new. The Bible doesn’t tell us how the disciples reacted when Jesus veered from the traditional words to say entirely unexpected things. This is what He said, “This bread is My body which is given for you” (v.19). For centuries you have remembered God’s deliverance from Egypt, now you will have a new and greater deliverance to remember. “Do this in remembrance of Me” (v.19).

➔ And there was more, “This cup being poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood,” (v.20) that is, “through My death that is coming soon.”

- ✘ It was new. Now the old Passover meal had run God’s intended course. It had no more purpose, beyond its place in God’s history. So, when Christians, like our congregation does

every other year, host a Seder meal, we are not celebrating the Old Testament Passover. We are merely learning of how it led up to and points us now to something new.

➔ The book of Hebrews tells us, four different times, that this new deliverance; these new deeds of Jesus are unrepeatable. He did them “once and for all” (Heb. 7:27, 9:12 & 26, 10:10); that is for all people and for all time. Now Jesus will be the Lamb, whose blood (and death) covers over the people to protect them from God’s wrath; from the angel of death; from every evil. His death, once and for all, enables people to leave their slavery to sin behind; to be God’s people in freedom forevermore. Jesus is the new; the greater Passover Lamb.

✘ But, there’s more! Jesus is not just the lamb who protects from death. He is the deliverer; the leader; the one infinitely greater than Moses whom God chose to deliver Israel. Jesus is both sacrifice and deliverer! So in that present moment, beginning at this Last Supper, Jesus performs a new exodus.

➔ He goes ahead of His disciples; ahead of His enemies; ahead of everyone into death, being nailed to a cross. Why? So that you and I don’t have to die eternally for our sins. Yes, Jesus goes through death; through the sea; and comes out onto dry ground; to a new and vibrant life that leaves all of our sins drowned in that water and it strips death permanently of all its dread.

✘ That year the old Passover ended. But what Jesus was doing did not end at all; not for His disciples; not for you; not for the whole world. For Jesus took the old and fulfilled it; creating the new, eternal Passover that Jesus desired so desperately to eat with His disciples that night and for all time.

### III. Our Future

✘ That’s the Past and the Present. Now, the Future! Yes, the events of that night were for the future, too. We know that’s the case because of two specific words that Jesus said. They are the words “until,” and “remembrance.”

➔ Twice Jesus says, “until”. First in verse 16, “For I tell you I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And then two verses later, “For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (v.18).

➔ Then, in verse 19, Jesus says the second word – “remembrance”: “Do this in remembrance of Me.”

✘ Let’s take the second word first, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” Even though Jesus’ eternal deliverance work is done “once and for all” time and for all people, this new meal that He gave to His disciples is a gift that He intends to keep on giving!

➔ The events of that night and the following days – Jesus’ arrest, sacrifice and death – push out; running into the future and around the world; year after year; century after century, as that saving Gospel goes out and is believed over and again. And with the Gospel, that new gift; the meal that Jesus instituted came from the upper room, through the cross, and out of the empty tomb to all who are covered with His blood by faith.

➔ As you and I will celebrate in three days, we know that Jesus lives. And it is the living Jesus who gives us His true body to eat and His true blood to drink. And He tells us all, “Remember.”

✘ That’s not the same as “recall,” which is something that you only do in your head. No, Jesus says, “Remember,” intending you to do that in your heart. Remember...and believe. Remember...and give thanks.

➔ His gift is real, whether you or your neighbors or your friends, remember it or not. Our actions don’t make Jesus’ true body and blood given for us to eat and drink real. Only the living, ascended and reigning Jesus does that.

- ✘ But remembering in faith; in humility; in need – this is how all of God’s gifts are received to our benefit and blessing. Remembering Jesus’ gift in faith says, “Yes, Lord. The new gift You have given is here for us, protecting us from the death of our sins; strengthening us together in one united, confessing body believers; all wrapped together in Your love. Yes, Lord. The new gift is here for us, and it will be ... “until.”
- ✘ That’s the second word. Jesus’ precious gift goes on into the future until it is fulfilled when the reign of God comes in all of its glory and power. That means that the Lord’s Supper is also a temporary gift. Historically the Christian Church has called it “a foretaste of the feast that is to come.”
  - ➔ That feast; that banquet is when death will be swallowed up forever and we will all be at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; with that believing criminal that died next to Jesus; with His apostles; with all who remember and believe that Jesus’ deliverance-work is the only way that we are saved, forgiven and made alive forevermore. Yes, by God’s mercy alone, you and I will be sitting there too.

## **Conclusion**

- ✘ Past, present, and future: That really was an eternal Passover that Jesus ate with His disciples that night. The past fulfilled; the present changing all of history; and the future reaching out to us today and others who are still to come.
- ✘ So, why? Why did Jesus “earnestly desire” (v.15) that night? The two most obvious reasons are this: First, because He loves His Father. So He earnestly desired to do His Father’s will; to carry out His salvation plan.
  - ➔ And second, because Jesus loves sinners! He loved His disciples. He loved His enemies. And He loved you...then, now and forevermore! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.