

SERMON: 2018/03/29 (Maundy Thursday @ 1800, Year B) - Exodus 12:1-14 & John 13:1-17, 31b-35_BTR

Our readings this evening juxtapose – that means, places side-by-side – two “Passover” meals:

the very first one - *the original* one – celebrated in dilapidated, draughty shacks, in hushed, *fearful* voices, in the miserable slave-camps of (ancient) Egypt.

And, (for Christians, at least), the final and greatest Passover meal of them all, which we call “The Last Supper,” when Jesus instituted the Eucharist to supersede – replace – that other ritual (I just mentioned).

And this is a very significant point worth remembering.

The “Passover,” you see, was a yearly thing, and it commemorated what seemed like the *pinnacle* of God’s love manifested in the world:

His “breaking-in” to what was (back then) normal and routine – which was the outright enslavement of entire people-groups – and His *smashing* it – with ten, *ferocious* plagues [Ex. 7:14-12:36] and then, for the coup de grâce, drowning that whole system in the waves of the Red Sea – because it was, in fact, in the eyes of Heaven, a grotesque regime – an abominable, intolerable state of affairs.

For the Jews, it was unimaginable that such a *stupendous* demonstration of the Creator’s care - for order and peace - in His Creation could be surpassed.

Surely, they thought, *this* was the greatest and most dramatic evidence that the universe has a loving creator.

But Jesus was going to take His Fathers’ (divine) activism one step further; indeed, take it to its logical conclusion:

Where before the extermination a *single* generation of Egyptian male heirs sufficed to bring about the liberation of a *single* – albeit – chosen people [Ex. 11:1-6], now *one* man would be killed to save the *whole* world. And all prior history – and, therefore, all other miracles, interventions and rescue-missions – would shrink in importance against this one event – the crucifixion of the Christ on Calvary.

[Pause]

And why is it so important?

Because, from that point forward, there was now a way by which men and women ‘m[ight] enter the [heavenly] city’ - *as citizens* ‘by the gates’, [Rev. 22:14], which is *wonderful* news.

Indeed, so much so that this ‘promise of real estate in the glory-land’ [n.1] overflows the banks of being *only* that and invades the here and now with

'tremendous implications for personal and social transformation.'[\[n.2\]](#)

And we see this very starkly in the example that Jesus was setting for His disciples in our gospel reading tonight: about how we should tenderly seek to meet the undeniable, real *material* needs of each other and our city.

This is a task that *none* of us can excuse ourselves from:

Our "Lord," as He calls Himself, demands it from us.

His actions and words are explicit.

But that other thing He did, outside Jerusalem, *that* was something He *alone* offers, which none of us can provide - not to ourselves or our neighbors:

To "*wash us*" of our *sin*. [\[v.8\]](#)

– Of the "dirt" - the infection - that is on the inside

To *strip* away our shame, which renders us (categorically) unfit for God's (holy) presence in the eternal Kingdom (that is coming).

This gift can be found nowhere else except at the "foot" of the Cross; and it is given only to those who ask, in repentance, for it.

And, *boy*, is it needed: for there will be, we are (also) assured by Jesus, a *reckoning* – a "judgment" – when the 'Book of Life' will be opened in which all of my ugly, *creaturely* thoughts and secrets and acts are recorded [\[Psalm 69:28 / Rev. 3:5\]](#), and without the "clean slate" of divine forgiveness none of us have any hope – but for the one who's obedience *was* perfect, [\[Heb. 12:2\]](#).

So, let's *never* stop praising His name around the table where the last and best Passover is remembered.

Amen.

Footnotes:

1. Spurgeon, Charles H. (1992), *Faith Checkbook: 365-Day Devotional*, New Kensington, P. A.: Whitaker House, 76.
2. Foreman, Mark Wesley (2008), *Wholly Jesus: His Surprising Approach to Wholeness and Why It Matters Today*, Boise, I. D.: Ampleon Publishing, 37.