

Sermon Matthew 26 17 30 Maundy Thursday

Sermon: Maundy Thursday

Text: Matthew 26:17-30 (. 17)

Theme: In remembrance of...

Goal: To remember the two big events in God's deliverance plan to assure that we are free from the bondage of sin through the blood of the new covenant.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: This is the night when we remember the Institution of the Lord's Supper by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Someone wrote that the Holy Communion Liturgy is the oldest drama ever performed in the history of the world. And this drama has been performed without interruption through several centuries since it was instituted. Since Jesus celebrated the First Communion with His disciples, it has been shown in the Christian churches, has been performed thousands of times, and millions of people have assisted with it.

We know that the Lord's Supper is much more than just the performance of a drama or just something that the church celebrates "*in memoriam*". But it is also something "in memory of" and we need to be reminded what God's plan is beyond this celebration. Jesus said: "Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24,25).

I – The Old Testament Passover celebration

Jesus was celebrating the Jewish Passover with His disciples when He instituted the Holy Communion as a new rite to His church. "*He used the age-old ritual to explain the meaning of His death to His disciples, and thus gave them (and us) a way to appreciate more fully the purpose of God*" (ABC,1165). The Passover was (and still is) the most important Feast for the Jewish people. It was ordained by God, as we read in the Old Testament

reading for tonight (Exodus 12:1-14. 21-27). The very first Passover was celebrated by the Israelite on the night when they were delivered from the slavery in Egypt. They had to slaughter a lamb or a goat. God says : “Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses...The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood. I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt” (Ex 12: 7,13).

Year after year that Feast is celebrated by the Jewish families around a table with roasted lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and wine to drink.

Wikipedia explains: *“Children have a very important role in the Passover Seder. Traditionally the youngest child is prompted to ask questions about the Passover Seder, beginning with the words, Why is this night different from all other nights? The questions encourage the gathering to discuss the significance of the symbols in the meal. The questions asked by the child are:*

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights, we eat either unleavened or leavened bread, but tonight we eat only unleavened bread?

On all other nights, we eat all kinds of vegetables, but tonight, we eat only bitter herbs?

On all other nights, we do not dip [our food] even once, but tonight we dip twice?

On all other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining, but tonight we only recline?

This gives the opportunity to the family to remember all the great deeds that the God of Israel did for His people, teaching the children the story of Exodus and praising God. They sing some special Psalms too. - Isn't it a nice way to celebrate a Feast? It is not just to sit and to eat, but to remember, to teach the children, to have a good fellowship around God's Word.

II – The New Testament Passover celebration

“The details of the old story of the first Passover, the bitterness of the bondage, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb and the deliverance from Egypt, all formed the backdrop to Jesus' showing how He Himself would be the new

Passover Lamb and how His blood would be the new wine of the new exodus... Jesus has become the Sacrificial Lamb and the Mediator of a new covenant for all of us” (ABC 1165, 1166).

Jesus was reclining at a table with His disciples and, “while they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body... which is for you; do this in remembrance of me...Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying: Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins...do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (Matthew 26 and 1 Corinthians 11).

Like the blood of a lamb in the Old Covenant saved the people from death and gave them freedom from slavery, so now the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, saves us from eternal death, from the slavery of sin and gives us freedom, gives us a new life!

We believe that this is not just a Feast in Remembrance, but that the very body and very blood of Jesus is given to us for forgiveness of our sins according to His words and promise.

Are our children as aware of what is happening in the Lord's Supper, as the Jewish children are, as we heard about it? Do they know why we celebrate it and what is the history behind the Holy Communion? Maybe we need to introduce a “children talk” about certain subjects about the church around our tables...

We have the Sunday School for the children, where they learn the truths from the Bible according to their understanding and capacity. We have the Confirmation Class, where our teens learn in a very special way about Jesus, what the Lord's Supper is, and how to participate in it with blessings. But when Martin Luther wrote the Small Catechism, he wrote at the beginning of each of the six main parts: *“As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.”*

The apostle Paul wrote: “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes” (1 Cor 11:26). The celebration in remembrance of Jesus has the goal to proclaim whatever He did for us: His suffering, His death, His resurrection, - the forgiveness and salvation He brought to us through His sacrifice, and that He is still with us!

III – The Celebration of the Feast in the Father's Kingdom

But at the Lord's Supper we are not only looking to the past and celebrating it “in memory of” now, but we are looking to the future as well. The Communion gives us hope! Jesus said to His disciples: “I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.” As forgiven children of God, Jesus lifts our eyes up to the big Feast in His Father's home. Jesus spoke many times about a big feast table in heaven. Joy and fellowship will be there!

Conclusion: Good Friday and Easter are joined together in the Holy Communion. Jesus' suffering – His body and blood given on the cross for us, - and Jesus victory, - His glorious and resurrected body that ascended into heaven, - are here. And we are God's guests to this Feast. This is the privilege we have as God's children, loved and saved by His grace. Let us come and enjoy His blessing. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle,

Cape Town, 21 April 2011.