

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
First Sunday in Lent, February 14, 2016

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 164, 313:1, 163, 305:6-9, 311:1-4.

Lessons: Exodus 12:1-17, 1 Corinthians 10: 12-17, and The Passion History Part 1.*

Sermon Text: Matthew 26:17-30.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Do you have last words you'd want to say to people? I think most of us would, even if we go away for just a few days. We would want to tell people some things: What to do, how to behave, what we expect of them, "goodbye" and "I love you". I think we'd have much more to say in anticipation of our death.

Today, as we begin the Lenten season leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection, we look at some of Jesus' last words to his disciples before he died. If you remember the chronology, you know that after Jesus and his disciples leave this upper room, they will go to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will engage in extremely serious prayer with his heavenly Father – and be betrayed unto death by Judas Iscariot.

So today let's look at some of the

EVENTS IN THE UPPER ROOM

- 1. As Jesus' disciples begin the celebration of the Passover, Jesus gives them a message of betrayal.**
- 2. For his faithful disciples, Jesus also gives them a message and a sacrament of forgiveness.**

All four evangelists record these events. John records much more detail, including much of what Jesus said and did in the upper room.

First of all, Jesus told his disciples to find the place where he would celebrate the Passover with them. ***"Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.' So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover."*** (Matthew 26:18-19 NIV)

Sharing of the Passover meal was acceptable if a family wasn't big enough to eat the whole lamb by itself. Here were 13 men – Jesus and his 12 disciples – who had left everything – their families and previous occupations – to follow Jesus.

Jesus told his disciples to make preparation for the Passover meal. Remember that this was a time when rooms would be at a premium in Jerusalem, with Jews from all over coming to Jerusalem.

Jesus would have wanted a private place on this evening so that he could warn Judas Iscariot and so that he could institute what we call the Lord's Supper for his disciples.

In the 15 or so minutes of this sermon we will talk about what took hours in the lives of Jesus and his disciples, but we are not going to try to talk about everything that happened that evening. Much happened in that upper room and today we are going to just talk about a few of those things.

After sunset, Jesus and his disciples would have gathered and reclined on couches around the table. The Passover meal consisted of four parts: first, a preliminary course which included the first cup of wine and dish of herbs, second, the recital of the Passover history and the drinking of the second cup of wine, third, the meal proper beginning with the blessing for the unleavened bread, the eating of the lamb with bitter herbs, and the cup of wine after the meal, and fourth, the conclusion with the singing of Psalms 114-118.

The Passover celebrates God's deliverance of the children of Israel from the slavery in Egypt as recorded in the first chapters of the book of Exodus. In Egypt the Lord told them to slaughter a lamb at twilight on the 14th

day of the month and to put some of the blood on the doorframes of their houses. The lamb was to be roasted and eaten by the families that evening. During the night the angel of death went through the land killing the firstborn in every house of the Egyptians but passing over the homes of the Israelites which were marked with blood. This was to be celebrated every year.

While they were eating the Passover, Jesus made a shocking announcement. One of those eating with him would betray him. ***“And while they were eating, he said, ‘I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.’ They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, ‘Surely not I, Lord?’ Jesus replied, ‘The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.’ Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, ‘Surely not I, Rabbi?’ Jesus answered, ‘Yes, it is you.’***

By making a general announcement rather than a specific accusation against Judas, Jesus was also inviting the others to examine their own hearts. And it worked. They became very sad. One by one they asked ***“Surely not I, Lord?”*** They realized that each of them could fall.

Obviously no one suspected Judas, for everyone asked ***“Surely not I, Lord?”*** The fact that these men closest to Jesus, who had been with him for the better part of three years could possibly betray Jesus is also a warning for us, especially we who have followed Jesus for many years. Satan is constantly at work trying to lead us astray. Just as Jesus’ closest disciples were warned, so we must take such a warning to heart. God writes to the Corinthian Christians: ***“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”*** (1 Corinthians 10:12 NIV)

John writes that Jesus said ***“this is to fulfill the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.’”*** This was foretold in Psalm 41: ***“Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”*** (Psalm 41:9 NIV)

Mark writes that Jesus said ***“The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”*** (Mark 14:22 NIV) Although Scripture was being fulfilled, that did not excuse Judas. God would hold him responsible for his actions. Judas at that moment could have repented, but he did not. Instead, Satan found room in his heart, ***“Satan entered into him.”*** (John 13:27) and Judas left the room filled with a determination to betray Jesus into the hands of the chief priests.

“One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple [whom we recognize was the apostle John] and said, ‘Ask him which one he means.’ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. ‘What you are about to do, do quickly,’ Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.” (John 13:23-30)

We next meet Judas when he identified Jesus with a kiss in the garden of Gethsemane. We will look more closely at this next Sunday. This should sober us in our relationship with Christ! This too was part of Jesus’ grief and sorrow and sufferings.

After Judas departed, Jesus concluded the Passover meal in a way which was totally new. Why? The Old Testament Passover meal, which pointed forward to Christ and his sacrifice since the time of the first Passover would be fulfilled and have served its purpose when Jesus died the very next day.

Jesus now instituted the New Testament sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Instead of the lamb in the Passover, Christ in this sacrament, in, with, and under the bread gives us his body – crucified the next day – and in, with, and under the wine he gives his blood, which would be poured out as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins the next day, on the day we call Good Friday.

Luther compiled the words of Scripture which we learned and memorized: “The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the apostle Paul tell us: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body, which

is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

“Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

“And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.”

Of course, Jesus’ words have been misunderstood and wrongfully explained. Jesus did not say ‘This bread and wine is changed into my body and blood’ as the unscriptural doctrine of transubstantiation claims. Jesus did not say ‘This bread and wine represents my body and blood as many other churches claim. Jesus said “This is my body. Jesus said “This is my blood.” That is as certain as saying (hold up your Bible) “This is my Bible.” When I say that I do not mean that this book in my hand represents my Bible. When I say that I do not mean that this book in my hand was changed into my Bible. So in attempting to understand what Jesus said, we use three prepositions: We believe that in, with, and under the bread and the wine we are truly receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. We cannot explain it. We cannot understand it. But because Jesus said it, we believe it.

Many things critical to our Christian faith happened in this upper room on the same night in which Jesus was betrayed. May we learn again of them and the events of the next 24 hours this Lenten season when we remember Jesus’ sufferings and death. After all, he did it for all mankind, for me, and for you. Amen.

* For the text of The Passion History, go to the [Weekly Sermons](http://www.lutheranlccf.org) page of the LCCF Website, www.lutheranlccf.org