

The Last Supper (Mark 14: 12-25)

The Passover with the Disciples

12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, 'Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?' ¹³ So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, "The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' ¹⁵ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.' ¹⁶ So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.' ¹⁹ They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, 'Surely, not I?' ²⁰ He said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.'

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' ²³ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. ²⁴ He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

(Translation © Lawrence Moore, *Mark for Missional Disciples*, Walking the Walk Publications, 2018)

Commentary

Preparations for Passover: Jerusalem and deadly danger (14:12-16)

It is when we realise that Jesus and his disciples are an underground group, keenly aware of the deadly opposition centred on the temple and "living in the shadows", that Jesus' careful preparations for Passover make sense.

Jesus and his disciples will have to go into the city. This is highly dangerous, as Jesus well knows. Clearly, there was an anonymous group of sympathisers, living in the

city and linked to Jesus and his group. Jesus makes arrangements with them to have a private room in which to celebrate the Feast with his disciples.

The logistics are worked out carefully. Two disciples are to go into the city. Two men are hardly likely to attract the attention that Jesus and his band would if they went in *en masse*. There is an agreed signal: a man carrying a water jar. That's the contact. Carrying a water jar is normally women's work. It's a clever signal – unusual enough to be unmistakeable and noticeable, but not so unusual as to be conspicuous or arouse suspicion. The two are instructed not to talk to him, but simply to follow at a distance. The contact will lead them to the house. The two are to wait until he's gone in, then knock, and give the owner the agreed code (v14).

Jesus has already had word that this man is able to provide them with a large, unfurnished room upstairs that they can use. The two disciples are instructed to prepare the unfurnished room, and then return to Bethany to lead the group secretly into the city under the cover of darkness. Wonderful cloak-and-dagger stuff – yet terrible, terrifying and deadly.

Betrayal (14:17-21)

When we realise just what is at stake, and just how careful Jesus is having to be, we begin to take on board just how callous and cynical Judas' betrayal is. It doesn't matter how elaborate the precautions are that Jesus takes to ensure the group's safety: there is a traitor in their midst. They are doomed. We – the audience – know this. And so does Jesus.

Small wonder, then, that the opening words recorded in Mark's gospel are words of sorrow and accusation: "One of you will betray me!" The disciples are probably just beginning to relax, and believe that everything has gone safely according to plan. Jesus' words are a bombshell, and they are "deeply distressed", as Mark puts it. The Greek verb he uses is *lupeisthai*. It is the same word he uses to describe the reaction of the rich man as he turns away from Jesus in 10:22, and carries the sense of "shocked amazement". This is the closest Mark comes to English

understatement! They would have been shocked, frightened and devastated. Each says, “He can’t be talking about me, can he?” (14:9)

Does this reassure them? It *can’t* be true! The pressure must be getting to Jesus – he’s losing the plot. After all, if he only stopped and *thought* about what he was saying – even for a second – he’d realise just how ridiculous it sounded. Do they begin to relax, having convinced themselves that it’s all down to stress? Jesus speaks again, pressing the point. “Yes, I *do* know what I’m implying. So let me tell you straight. I’m not talking about one of our friends from around here, who has helped us thus far. I’m talking about you – the people in this room. It is one of the Twelve – however unbelievable you find that!”

Here is the betrayal that is almost inconceivable, and yet at the same time is the story of so many resistance movements: one of their own will sell them out. Jesus could not be clearer: “It is one of the Twelve – one of you dipping bread into the bowl with me!” This is a violation of the meal as the most sacred bond of trust. It echoes the lament of Psalm 49:1: “Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted – who ate of my bread – has lifted his heel against me!”

Judas has made a lucrative contract with the temple authorities to betray Jesus. Yet it will come at ultimate cost to him: “It would have been better if that person had not been born!” Jesus echoes his own words at Caesarea Philippi: “What will it profit anyone to gain the whole world, yet lose their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?” (8:36).

New covenant (14:22-25)

One question that arises is, given Jesus’ antipathy to the temple and its compromised cult, why does he *bother* with the Feast – particularly in view of the dangers associated with being in the city itself? The answer lies in what Jesus will *do* at the Passover. This is to be the New Covenant. Here is a word of hope and promise. Until now, he has told the disciples only that he will be handed over, will suffer horribly, will be killed and will rise again. Now he promises them that it is not

in vain. This has a purpose: his death is for *others*.

It's significant that Mark records the preparations for the Passover in great detail, yet shows no interest in the celebration of the Passover itself – the paschal liturgy. There is no mention of the symbolism of the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the fruit purée; there is no mention of the Passover lamb. This is what we would have expected from Jesus as the Passover celebrant. Instead, Mark focuses on Jesus' actions over the bread and wine, and his reinterpretation of these in terms of himself and his impending death. The conclusion is unmistakable: Jesus himself is the eschatological paschal lamb.

His actions of taking bread, blessing, breaking and giving it mirror his actions in feeding the crowds in the wilderness (6:41, 8:6). Only now, the bread that fed the crowds in the wilderness (echoing the manna with which God fed the Israelites) has become his body, which is about to be “broken and given”. Unlike those occasions, on which Jesus gave the disciples the bread to feed others, this bread is “for them”.

Similarly, the wine now becomes his “blood of the covenant” (Exodus 24:8). Yet the scene is not Sinai, but Golgotha: the cup from which Jesus invites them to drink is his “cup of suffering”. Jesus has already warned James and John on the way to Jerusalem that he is facing a “cup” and a “baptism” (10:38). The incident falls immediately on the heels of the third and final passion prediction. Within a few verses, this is the cup that Jesus will be begging God to remove in Gethsemane (14:36).

In inviting them to eat and drink, Jesus invites them symbolically to share in the blessings that the bread and wine represent. There are two things to note: firstly, eating and drinking is an act of commitment to and solidarity with Jesus on the Way of the Cross. This is how the New Exodus “works”: it is the journey to Life through dying and rising. That dynamic and commitment is at the heart of both baptism and Communion. Easter shows us what Jesus meant at Caesarea Philippi when he talked about taking up the cross and losing one's life in order to find it (8:34-35). The

disciples will fail spectacularly before the night is out, yet they will become the community that is constituted by the death and resurrection of Jesus – the church. They will become the “people of The Way” in the face of persecution and suffering, as Mark is reminding his own community to remember. The regular celebration of the Eucharist (whose liturgy Mark quotes in 14:22-25) is not some arcane religious ritual, but the means by which the church is reminded, nourished and strengthened to be the community that walks the Way of the Cross.

And secondly, in Jesus’ hands (literally), Communion becomes a communion (sharing) in Jesus’ suffering, death and rising. As such, it is not a “memorial”: it doesn’t point backwards, but forwards to what is immediately ahead for Jesus. Vitally, the Way of the Cross is the road to Life because it is also the road to the Kingdom of God (14:25)

We now have the answer to the question about Jesus’ participation in the Feast: Jesus doesn’t “do” Passover! The road to the Kingdom is not Exodus, maintained and guarded by the temple and the Purity System: it is Easter. This is the New Exodus, and the paschal lamb is Jesus himself. Here we see Jesus’ final break with the temple and the Purity System: the “sanctuary” he offers is his own messianic practice of faithfulness to the Way of the Cross – to suffering and death. The blood that seals the New Covenant is his own blood, which “is poured out for many”. There could be no more potent pollutant than that under the Purity System. Yet it is precisely the God-given means of healing and salvation.

Grace

We talk glibly about the “new covenant” as a covenant of grace. Yet it is when we listen to the words of institution, prefaced by “On the night in which he was betrayed ...” and realise the sick despair that Jesus must have been feeling as he sat at the meal, that we begin to appreciate what “grace” means. It means Jesus facing the fact that one of his handpicked friends, with whom he had shared his life and hopes and dreams, had callously and deliberately decided to betray him. And Jesus knew that this was the night. He knew, too, that his best efforts to convince the

disciples about the Way of the Cross had failed. They would all desert him before the night was out. If his criterion for true discipleship was “denying themselves, taking up the cross and following”, then none of the Twelve was actually going to make the grade. Everything that Jesus has worked for is about to be smashed beyond any hope of repair.

Looking all this fully in the face, Jesus’ response is to promise them a future. It is a future based on what he will do alone. It is a New Covenant based not on their faithfulness but on *Jesus’* faithfulness. It is the promise of fellowship, given to traitors and deserters. Even though Peter will deny three times that he ever even *knew* who Jesus was (another sign of the intense threat facing the community), Jesus will never deny *him*.

Going deeper into the text (Mark 14: 12-25)

- The Lord’s Supper is really important; it’s so important that some denominations do it every week
- The Lord’s Supper is really important; it’s so important that some denominations do it once a quarter or even twice a year.
- For the early church The Lord’s Supper was really important; so important that it was an everyday occurrence.

The early church remembered Jesus death, his resurrection, his command to do this in memory of me every time they met together. From the accounts in acts it’s clear that their meeting together was very different from the communion customs we have fallen into. There was a time in our church history that the Eucharist was only said in Latin for those gathering in each other’s homes the Supper would’ve been in their native language. There was a time when communion was done at a high altar hidden away but for them it was done in the intimacy of a crowded room. There was a time when you came to communion with a

communion card, elders wore silver ties. The fellowship described in acts met together sometimes in the synagogue, sometimes in people's homes but they met, they chatted, they had a meal and at every meal they remembered Jesus. And that meal had the pomp and ceremony of a family gathering round a kitchen table.

Maybe that's why we have added layers of tradition and routine; let me explain: I have recollections as a wee boy of grand family gatherings. It was usually at Christmas, at some aunty's house, resigned to the children's end of the feast - usually with the table with the dodgy leg! However, my abiding memory is that they were always excruciatingly awkward occasions, a disparate family trying desperately to keep it together for a few hours as we did something special together before we could jump back into our cars to go to our homes to be where we actually wanted to be and to do something that we really wanted to do with people we actually happy and comfortable being with.

1. The early church met together they did things together and enjoyed being together. The questions for us are: Are we are less like the early church and more like my aunty's house?
2. Do we in our hearts suspect that some of us don't really get on and don't really want to be there and so to hide the cracks in the fellowship we plaster over them with stuff. Routines, costumes', traditions, well-honed patterns of relationships that negotiate the unexploded landmines of our past experiences and relationships.
3. Do our communion patterns say more about past argument than we are happy admitting.
4. Do our communion routines smack more of compromise and unresolved debate than theology put into practice?
5. Do our communion services say more about the strong opinions and wills of members come and gone than the tradition of the early church .

Question: Can we and should we strip away our routines and just meet together, remembering Jesus and enjoying God's and each other's company? And why is that such an uncomfortable and scary thought?

All age worship ideas (Mark 14: 12-25)

One of the keys to good all age worship is to keep it simple and relatively short. Ideally aim for a service of 45-50 minutes. That's not to say a service can't be longer but if you are thinking of 1hr30+ think carefully about your use of space and above all else be creative, take risks and have fun – partying is integral to the kingdom but we'll leave that for a year on Luke...

A meal for traitors

Reflection - At the time of writing this the news and social media are awash with people incensed by the actions of Donald Trump's government in separating children from parents at US Border Control, and detaining them in prison-like facilities. Jeff Sessions, one of Trump's chief officers and a prominent Methodist used words from the Bible to justify this separation – at the very least a betrayal of Jesus call to welcome children and to see in them the nature of the kingdom that we might come close to it.

Another secretary from the administration spoke publicly to denounce media reports and assert that the children were being treated well 'we change their diapers' – it was an uncaring comment ignorant of the traumatic impact this separation has had and will continue to have on the lives of the children, and families, affected. It is a betrayal not only of their human rights but of their value as human beings.

The pressure from media, from key public figures and from his own family has led

the President to repent of the actions and to sign a law stopping further separation and estrangement.

It should never have happened and much work will still need to be done in supporting, loving and caring for those children who have been traumatised by the removal from their parents and care-givers. The glimmer of hope in this tragic situation is that even the seemingly hardest heart can be changed.

Jesus sits at table with his friends knowing full well that one of them has 'sold him out' to the authorities. This is the beginning of the end and Jesus lets everyone know that he is fully aware of what has taken place. His words against his betrayer are not condemnation but prophetic sadness at the torment that Judas will endure as the realisation of his actions sink in. It feels like even at this point Jesus presents him with the opportunity to repent, to own up. Jesus hasn't turned him away from the table – maybe he could sense the conflict in Judas – Judas has walked with him on this discipleship journey and Jesus still welcomes him and invites him to receive the symbols of his body and blood that will be the ultimate sacrifice for the world on a Roman cross. Maybe this is what tipped Judas over the edge – that Jesus knows and still extends kingdom hospitality. Judas was too proud to go back on his decision and Jesus prophecy is tragically fulfilled as Judas cannot live with his actions.

Betraying Jesus is as much about what we do not do than what we do. When we remain silent, or unfeeling, at the injustice around us; when we put our own needs before the needs of the poor; when we put wealth and earthly reward over service and kingdom living. Jesus doesn't turn us away from the table but offers us the opportunity to repent. There are times when we need to swallow our pride, admit our failings and start afresh. Jesus invites us to reconnect with the New Covenant that God makes through him and be renewed ourselves, ready to be faithful in our following. Even at our lowest point he offers us kingdom hospitality and says 'why torment yourself when I offer freedom?'

Idea – You need a clothes maiden/dryer, some clothes for hanging, a bowl with soap

and a pair of dirty white socks. Explain that you didn't have time to finish off your washing before church so you brought it with you. Pull out the socks and show them to everyone. Reflect out loud that you could probably get away with washing the tops because the rest will be hidden in the shoe. Sometimes that is what we think following Jesus is like – just making sure the bit of our lives people can see looks holy or good but not dealing with the not so good bits that we keep hidden.

Wash the socks in the bowl until they are clean and explain that when Jesus invites us to his table it is his will that we should be completely clean, body and soul (or sole...yes, I know...) or rather completely free of those hidden things. He doesn't want those things -'sin'- in our life to hold us back or torment us. He wants us to be free so that we can be disciples who make the difference – a people who share his love and act or speak out when human beings are not valued or their rights are ignored.

Prayer – I find the prayers of children in their own voices and words really powerful. Perhaps in advance invite any children to look for stories in the news or on CBBC Newsround and to share with what matters to them or concerns they have.

Invite the children to pray their prayers out loud – perhaps written beforehand or during the service – and to pray over the church what they would want to see God do.

It would make sense in light of the reading to move into a time of Holy Communion leaving space for people to lay aside and repent of those things that are not right, knowing that whether we are able to fully let go or not Jesus does not turn us away from his table.

Liturgies and hymns Mark 2: 1-12

This is where you can find hymn suggestions and liturgies for use with this week's text.

Call to worship:

Jesus Christ is the Way

We are called to walk with him

Jesus Christ is the Truth

We are called to learn with him

Jesus Christ is the Life

We are called to life with him

There is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism Christ has one church - let us join as one church to worship God

🎵 One church, one voice Word and Music © Paul Robertson

www.satelliteworship.com

Prayer of approach:

Great and Gracious God Merciful and Mighty God Infinite and Intimate God

We are here to worship you You made us and all that is once there was nothing until you spoke and then there was everything

We worship you as the source of all life We worship you as the source of all beauty and truth We worship you as the love that fires the sun and all the stars. And we give thanks that you have come to be with us in Jesus We rejoice that you have called us to be with you . Draw near to us as we draw near to you... Draw near to us as we draw near to you

May we be different because of this time because of these days; because of these people we are here with.

We ask you to breathe your Holy Spirit into our worship now

Hear us as we confess our sins :

We are not the people you made and meant us to be.

We have sinned against you – in thought and word and deed Through what we have done and what we have not done We look to you for mercy now...

♪ Kyrie eleison Music: John L Bell © WGRG, The Iona Community
hymnary.org/tune/kyrie_bridget_bell

Silence of assurance - you are forgiven

[note here on use of silence in liturgy - we created a clear musical signal to introduce silence and to end it - three chimes can be used. Silence can be used in different ways - can be cued up and purposed intentionally. All of our silences were 4 mins - they were all timed. Best not to guess timing or just feel it as you will 99 times out of 100 end it too quickly because you are anxious about how long it feels. Tell people it will be 1 or 2 or 4 or 10 mins and stick to that rigorously. People need to be trained to keep silent.

♪ Listen now for the gospel Words and music: Zimbabwean traditional; translated John L Bell © 2002 WGRG, The Iona Community Church Hymnary (4th edition) #779

Affirmation of Faith:

We believe in a loving God, who made us and all that is, who loves us and all the world with a father's tenderness and a mother's strength

We believe in God, our maker

We believe in a saving God who became human and lived among us, who died and rose to set us free and give us life

We believe in Jesus Christ, our Saviour

We believe in a living God, the breath of life in all life, The gift of God to the people of God

We believe in the Holy Spirit, our life-giver

We believe in one God

A trinity of holiness and love - This is the God we worship and proclaim

Invitation

Gathered in Christ's name, we are invited to come to His table. Just as the gospel is passed on through us

So this invitation is given through us Still today, Jesus calls to himself those He wants to be with Him Those who are beloved of God And this is you - praise God! And this is the folk around you - Amen! Still today, Jesus comes to us speaking peace, making peace Calling us to speak peace to one another, to make peace with one another Sisters and Brothers, I call on you to greet one another and to invite one another to the table: (we turn to greet one another with these words) 'Peace be with you - come to the table'

♪ We are coming Lord to the table Words and Music: Sierra Leone Global Songs for Worship #49

The story

Hear the words of the institution of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ from Mark's Gospel:

When it was evening, he came with the twelve... While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.'

As our Lord gave thanks, so now we do the same:

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts

We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give our thanks and praise

Thanksgiving

It is our duty and our joy to give you thanks, Creator God. All life is lived in you, in you all life begins and ends and in the universe, your beauty shines a million ways, creation speaks your glory without words, but still we hear its praise, and dutiful and joyful we join in...

We praise you God our maker

It is our duty and delight to praise you Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, you are the image of the God we cannot see, the one for whom and through whom all that is was made, the one in whom all things are held together and sustained ...you are the one through whom all things are reconciled to God, and peace is made in earth and heaven by your cross...

We praise you Jesus Christ our Lord

It is our duty and desire to pray Come Holy Spirit, and to give you praise - you are the Lord, the Life, the one who brings new birth, you are the Holy one, who sighs and sings in earth and us
you are the fire in whom we are baptized, the air we breathe, you are the living water springing up in us, the life we share

We praise you Holy Spirit

Creating, Saving, Living God, we join with all the Church on earth and join the Church with you in heaven So that together we may sing your praise...

♪ Sanctus and Benedictus Words and Music © 2018 Iain McLarty and Doug Gay
(tune: Picardy) iainmclarty@gmail.com

For us you were born, for us you healed

For us you preached and taught and showed the way to heaven,

For us you were crucified

And for us, after death, you rose again. Lord Jesus Christ, present with us now, for all that you have done and all that you have promised, what have we to offer?

Our hands are empty, our hearts are sometimes full of the wrong things But with

you is mercy And the power to change us,

So as we do in this place,

What you did in an upstairs room, Send down your Holy Spirit, on us and on these
gifts of bread and wine,

Let them be for us - your body

Healing, forgiving and making us whole

Let us be for you - your body

Loving and serving you in the world, until your kingdom comes.

Amen

♪ All who are thirsty Words and Music: Brenton Brown, Glenn Robertson © 1998

Vineyard Songs www.vineyardchurches.org.uk/songs/all-who-are-thirsty/

The Lord's Prayer

Communion

This is the body of Christ This is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for
many

Post-communion prayer

♪ God loved the world so much Words: John L Bell © WGRG, The Iona Community
(tune: Wondrous love) Known Unknowns #25, published by Wild Goose Resource

Group Closing responses

Closing response

Gracious God, we are not our own

We belong to you and to one another in you

Risen Christ, we are not the same

Being with you has changed us

Holy Spirit, we cannot walk in Christ's way without you

Go with us now, we pray and set your blessing on us

Dismissal and Blessing

Go in peace to walk in the way of Christ The Blessing of one God in Holy Trinity - go
with you and remain with you

Amen

Service from the Ministers Conference: Walking the Way

Words and Music © 2018 Iain McLarty and Doug Gay: iainmclarty@gmail.com

Additional Hymn Suggestion

62. NOTHING SPECIAL

(Revd Dr John Campbell; tune: John Brown's body)

1. They were really nothing special
they were just like me and you
there was Bart and John & Philip,
James & James & Andrew too,
Matthew, Thomas, Simon, Simon,
Judas, Judas, (what a crew!)
yet Jesus chose them all....

Jesus called them to his table

with a love both strong & stable
He alone could make them able
to live their lives for God!

2 Jesus called them & he changed them,
made them special, made them new;
by his life, his death, his rising
set them free and pulled them through-
sent them out to share with others
how God's love could change them too
- Christ Jesus changed them all!

**Jesus called them to his table
with a love both strong & stable
He alone could make them able
to live their lives for God!**

3. Now, as guests, we are invited,
to this feast, to make us new;
for the pow'r that rescued Thomas
can set free both me and you -
Jesus' love can make us ready
to pass on the message too -
Christ Jesus calls us all!

**Jesus calls us to his table
with a love both strong & stable
He alone can make us able
to live our lives for God!**