

Being a Servant
Luke 22: 1-17
Isaiah 50: 4-9a

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Doug Browne
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Isaiah 50: 4-9a

The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backwards.
I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Luke 22: 1-17

Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they were afraid of the people.

Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, ‘Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it.’ They asked him, ‘Where do you want us to make preparations for it?’ ‘Listen,’ he said to them, ‘when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters and say to the owner of the house, “The teacher asks you, ‘Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” He will show you a

large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there.’ So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, ‘I have eagerly 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.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!’ Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this.

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

This is a historic night. This night Jesus the Christ took the meal that defined what it is to be Jewish, and he redefined it for his followers, to make the meal that defines what it is to be Christian.

The Passover, with its roasted lamb and the blood on the doorposts, defined what it was to be part of the people of Israel. They remembered the Exodus, when God rescued them from slavery in Egypt and brought them through the sea to the Promised Land.

In the Exodus, God made a disparate bunch of tribes into a nation. Every time Jews celebrate the Passover, they celebrate the goodness of God to them and they celebrate what it is to be God’s people.

They celebrate as a family around the table. If you are ever invited to celebrate the Seder, the Passover meal, with a Jewish family, understand that this is a great honor. In the invitation, your friend is claiming you as honorary family.

That Thursday night, Jesus is celebrating the Passover with his disciples. He is sitting down with his honorary family to celebrate this meal that defines what it is to be a Jew.

He knows that this will be the last time. He knows that one of his disciples will betray him, and he knows who.

He knows what Judas will do. But he doesn't kick him out. He doesn't tell the others to shun the traitor. Judas loves him anyway. Jesus sits down and eats the Passover meal with his disciples, including Judas. He loves them all, and he eats this meal with them, because he loves them.

At the end of the meal, Jesus takes the bread, the ordinary loaf of unleavened bread on the table. He breaks it and he serves it to them. He explains to them that this is his body, broken for them. His body will be broken, tomorrow. What crucifixion does to the human body is grotesque.

He pours out the wine, and serves it to them, too. He explains that this is a new covenant with God, sealed by the shedding of his blood. His blood will be shed, tomorrow. Crucifixion is a bloody business.

Jesus tells his disciples that every time they eat bread and drink wine, which is to say, every time they eat, they are to do it in remembrance of him. They are to remember him serving them, and they are to serve others the same way.

Both the Passover table and the Lord's Supper Table involve remembrance, but there is an important difference.

At the Passover table, everyone who is gathered is family. Those are the only people who are invited to the table.

At the Lord's Supper Table, everyone who is gathered is family. Jesus has invited all of God's Children, because we are all part of the amazing family of God. Simon Peter is at this table, and James and John. So are High-Church Anglicans in Westminster Cathedral, and barefoot Pentecostals in Haiti. So are Coptic Christians in Egypt and down the road. So is Betty, and Rondal, and Fred, and Lyn. So is Judas Iscariot. Jesus invited him, and Jesus chooses to serve him. If Jesus chose not to kick him out, how can we kick anyone out who wants to be here?

And, look – there's a place for you. As we partake of the Lord's Table, tonight and every time, remember. Remember that God came down from Heaven. He was born, lived, suffered, and died, for you. And for me. And for our brothers and sisters. Let us take him up on his invitation. Come to the dinner. Serve and be served.

AMEN.