

Evotional

**Bible passage: Mark 14:12-52.
betrayal.”**

Speaker: Neil Durling.

Sermon title: “Sharing &

Date: 26.5.13.

Message:

Feast of Unleavened bread - historically: The Israelites freedom from Egyptian captivity was the focus of the festival. However, I imagine there was always mixed emotions when this feast was celebrated... No well balanced person would wish the death of the firstborn on their worst enemy would they? The Egyptians had been warned – each of the ten plagues represented their ten gods; from the least to the most powerful. So they knew where this was heading and yet still Pharaoh was stubborn and would not let the Israelite people go. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Egyptians couldn't have joined the Israelites in painting blood on their doorposts as well, but they didn't... and the results? Catastrophic.

This is probably the third time the disciples had come to Jerusalem (as men had to) to celebrate the festival with Jesus. Two of them found a man carrying a jar of water and prepared the upper room.

The Festival of unleavened bread - The Passover Seder: In Leviticus 23:4-8 we read: *“These are the LORD’s appointed festivals, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: the LORD’s Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD’s Festival of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do not do any of your ordinary work. For seven days present a food offering to the LORD. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do not do any of your ordinary work.”*

This is one of the big three Jewish festivals and the most important of it happened on the first day: The Passover Seder. Passover means: “Passed over, or skipped over, or he had pity, or he hovered over, or guarding”. The same word is used in Isaiah 31:5: *Like birds hovering overhead, the Lord Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will “pass over” it and will rescue it.* Seder means “Order”.

And this special meal was indeed ordered to celebrate what God had done. It had fifteen parts paralleling the fifteen steps in the Temple in Jerusalem on which the Levites stood during Temple services, and which were memorialized in the fifteen Psalms (120-134: "Songs of Ascent") that were sung whilst the entire population made a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate their liberation over 3,300 years ago from slavery in ancient Egypt and their birth as a nation under the leadership of Moses for the festival.

The Passover Lamb: A lamb or goat, that was unblemished, was used and you had to be careful not to break any of its bones when eating it (Exodus 12:46). It was selected four days before the exodus and checked daily. When sacrificed its blood was placed on the doorposts of the doors (Exodus 12:7; 22, 23), which were called *mezuzah*. This is where a servant who wanted to serve his master for life would have his ear pierced (Exodus 21:6). Every family large enough to completely consume a young lamb or wild goat was required to offer one for sacrifice at the Jewish Temple and eat it that night. If the family was too small to finish eating the entire offering in one sitting, an offering was made for a group of families, the quorum being thirty people. Because of the Passover sacrifice's status as a sacred offering, the only people allowed to eat it were those who had the obligation to bring the offering. Among those who could not offer or eat the Passover lamb were: An apostate (Exodus 12:43), a servant (Exodus 12:45), an uncircumcised man (Exodus 12:48), a person in a state of ritual impurity and a non-Jew.

Reclining at the table eating: Jesus told the group (probably larger than the twelve disciples): *‘Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me.’* Betray means “To put in prison”. They were saddened; sorrowful and filled with grief. It was an inner grief rather than the outer, loud beating of the breast that King David when his son died or in Jesus’ parable about the repentant man who leaves the temple justified after beating his breast, as opposed to the arrogant religious leader. Jesus says woe to this man, it would be better if he hadn't been born. “Woe” isn't a vitriolic judgement, rather an exclamation of grief.

He broke the bread: Jesus said: *'Take it; this is my body.'* The bread, Matzo, was an unleavened flatbread made solely from flour and water which is continually worked from mixing through baking, so that it is not allowed to rise. It was to be eaten on the first night of Passover. But why unleavened bread? It is one of the following four reasons:

1. They left Egypt with such haste that there was no time to allow baked bread to rise. Matzo is a reminder of the rapid departure of the Exodus.
2. In the time of the Exodus, matzo was commonly baked for the purpose of travelling because it preserved well and was light to carry. Therefore, it was baked intentionally for the long journey ahead.
3. Matzo has also been called *Lechem Oni* (Hebrew: "bread of poverty"). It serves as a symbol to remind Jews what it is like to be a poor slave and to promote humility, appreciate freedom, and avoid the inflated ego symbolized by more luxurious leavened bread.
4. Leaven/yeast represented impurity and sin and was there to be none of this during this festival.

He took a cup: Jesus said: *'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.'* Four cups of wine were drunk during the meal echoing God's promises as opposed to Pharaohs' threats:

1. I will bring you out.
2. I will deliver you.
3. I will redeem you.
4. I will take you.

Jesus spoke his words during the third one underlining that he had come to redeem us – to buy us out of the captivity of sin.

Mount of Olives: They go here after singing a hymn and Jesus tells them that they will be scattered like shepherd-less sheep, even Peter, who strongly denies that he will betray Jesus.

The garden of Gethsemane: This is where Jesus is betrayed with a kiss by Jesus as the other disciples run away, including a buck naked Mark – who actually wrote this account. What humility for Mark to include himself as the near pinnacle of this failure!

Betrayal brings about death: Literally for Jesus. But for us it usually brings death emotionally or spiritually. And Jesus shares his life with us in the midst of death and changes everything.

Questions:

1. Who are you like in the passage of Scripture and why?
2. What do you dislike in the passage?
3. What do you like in the passage?
4. Does imaging a large group with Jesus for the Last Supper go against your view of it?
5. What do you think of Judas' betrayal?
6. How have you experienced Jesus life in the midst of betrayal (please feel to be honest and vulnerable in your Smallgroup)?
7. How can you bring more meaning into communion for you?
8. why not share communion in your Smallgroup to finish this discussion...

Prayer:

Father God, Thank you Jesus offers us life in the midst of betrayal. In Jesus name, amen.