

PASSOVER LITANY

Call to Confession:

1 John 1 God is light; in God there is no darkness at all.

If we claim to have fellowship with God and fellowship with Jesus and walk in darkness, we live a lie – we live a life contrary to the truth of the Word. But if we walk in the light, as Jesus lived in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, the Passover Lamb of God, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Jesus the way into the mercy of the Father. Jesus is the Passover Lamb of God. When the Lord saw the blood of Lamb, the first born plague of death passed over and the children of God were saved.

Exodus 12



***Purify my heart, Let me be as gold and precious silver
Purify my heart, Let me be as gold, pure gold
Refiner's fire, My heart's one desire, Is to be holy,
Set apart for You, Lord I pray to be holy,
Set apart for You, my Master, Ready to do Your will.
Purify my heart, Cleanse me from within, And make me holy
Purify my heart, Cleanse me from my sin, deep within.***

The Assurance:

John 13: 1-12 In preparation for the Passover feast, Jesus took off his outer clothing, wrapped a towel around his waist and began to wash his disciples feet. Jesus said: "You do not know now what I am doing, but when it is finished you will understand. Unless I wash you, you have no part with me. You are clean. When he finished washing their feet, Jesus said "do you understand what I have done for you?"

There is a Redeemer

Sign of the Cross

John 19 On Passover evening they crucified Jesus. They took his clothes, and divided them in four. The remaining undergarment was woven in one piece from top to bottom. Let us not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." Later, knowing that all was now finished and the scriptures were fulfilled, also the ones about Passover, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine was there, so they soaked a sponge in wine, put the sponge on a hyssop branch and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the wine, Jesus said, "It is finished.

***Just as I am without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me
And that thou biddest me come to thee
O Lamb of God I come I come.***

Romans 3:25 All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by grace through the atonement that came through Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. (Colossians 2:14) Nailing

our sins to the cross Jesus disarmed the powers of sin and death. And so we are forgiven all our sins for Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. (1 Cor 5:7)

The Thanksgiving

We give thanks for our salvation; in the grace of Christ we're found.

*We are brought from isolation into lives of those around
All together we lack nothing as Christ's work is now revealed.
God is faithful and has called us into fellowship with him.*

*Let our speech reflect our oneness, echoing the words you said.
Keep us selfless in our actions, leading others where you led.*

*End divisive motivations, give us peace in unity
That surpasses understanding and restores us perfectly*

*We are baptized into Jesus. Barriers topple from within
Equally, the water frees and cleanses us from all our sin.
Jesus Christ is not divided; we are baptized in one name.
Unified in our redemption, Christ's salvation to proclaim.*



THE THANKSGIVING FELLOWSHIP OFFERING

Leviticus 23: 1 - 8; Exodus 12: 1 - 13

Jesus, our Passover Lamb Adriana Sybenga

If you ask me what part or book of the Bible is my favorite, I will immediately reply with the book of Luke. The stories of Jesus - his love for people, especially those on life's fringes truly speak to me. My second and third favorites are also found in the New Testament. As matter of fact, for a big part of my life I didn't really care for the Old Testament. Oh, for sure there are some stories I love: of Ruth, Job and of course, some of the Psalms. But for most part, the Old Testament was not my favorite reading - **until** I began to understand it more fully. And this week, in preparation for today - I was reminded of what I learned at seminary: one cannot understand the New Testament without reading the Old Testament. The Old Testament makes way for the New or put it another way, the New Testament completes the Old. The New Testament has many quotes and references to the Old. Biblical scholars believe that it is impossible to understand the New Testament feasts without a working knowledge of the one alluded to. This is certainly true for the Lord's Supper - the New Testament feast we hope to celebrate this morning. Jesus, on the night he is to be betrayed, institutes/introduces to his disciples the Lord's Supper. And Jesus does this as they are observing the Passover Feast.

Yet before we get into the details of the Passover, we should remember that this feast

lasts for a full week. This year Jews around the world will be celebrating it from April 19th to the 26th. And there are three components to it: the Passover Feast, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast Day of the Sheaf of First Fruits.

This morning we will focus only on the Passover Feast - the foundational experience for the Israelites. For Israel, the Passover is a defining moment. The Passover is the feast of God redeeming his people - setting them apart as his people. It is the story of God leading his people out of the land where they had been slaves - to a new way of life - to a life of freedom.

The Passover Feast begins with a meal called a Sedar - which means "order" in Hebrew - as the meal is done in a very prescribed order. The meal begins with an opening blessing which is spoken over the first cup of wine, and followed by the serving of bitter herbs. The bitter herbs - like horseradish - remind the Jews of the bitterness of their time in slavery. Also parsley dipped in salt water recalls the tears shed during their slavery.

The second course begins with the youngest child asking the question: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" And it is this question which would begin the telling of the Passover: of what God had done for his people Israel. Because even though rituals in themselves can be important - what is central to them is their story: the meaning of the ritual. In response to the child's question - which essentially asked why are we celebrating Passover - the story of Israel's beginnings, would be told.

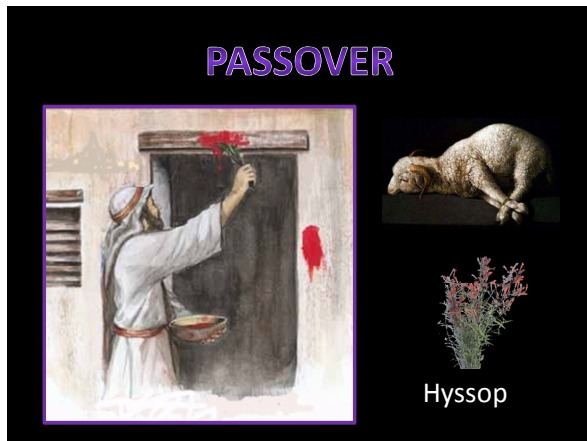
The story would begin with the telling of how Jacob, his sons and their children had come to Egypt to live there at the invitation and protection of Joseph. Over several hundred years, they had prospered and grown in number, so much so that the subsequent Pharaoh and the Egyptians had become concerned. As a result they forced the Israelites to become slaves and made their lives bitter with hard labor. They were forced to build cities with brick and mortar. They had to pump the river Nile for water to irrigate the fields for growing food. And when the forced labor didn't seem to diminish their numbers any, the Pharaoh decreed that all baby boys born would have to be thrown into the River Nile. This, he figured, would solve the problem once and for all.

The Israelites in their grief - cried out to God and God sent them Moses. Moses was chosen to go to the Pharaoh and demand that he give the Israelites time off so that they could go and worship their God in the desert. Pharaoh responds by saying that apparently the slaves have too much free time on their hands if they are thinking about time off, and so he increases their workload.

And then God begins to act. God sends the ten plagues: turning water into blood, covering the land with frogs and then with gnats, followed by flies. And it is with this plague of the flies that God begins the distinction between the Israelites and Pharaoh and his people. The Israelites no longer suffer the effects of the plagues - which continue: the Egyptian livestock become sick and die; there is an epidemic of festering

boils, the hailstorm which destroys their crops, the invasion of locusts, the plague of darkness covering Egypt for three days - and then the finale: the plague of the firstborn.

And it is with this last plague that Israel is asked to do their part. God tells Moses to relay to the people that now they have to also set themselves apart. On the evening picked by God, they are to choose a lamb to be sacrificed. And it could not be just any lamb - rather it was to be a year old male, without any blemish or defect. They were to kill the lamb and with a hyssop plant paint the sides and tops of their doorframe to their homes. The meat of the lamb was to be roasted over the fire - not boiled - and eaten at the prescribed time along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.



This putting of blood from the lamb with hyssop was to be done on all Israelite door frames so that when the angel of death would come through the land of Egypt to kill the firstborns - the angel would pass over all the homes with the blood of the lamb on it - thus saving the firstborn in that home. It was after the angel of death had gone through the land - *that the Egyptians would beg the Israelites to leave*. And so the Israelites left on their journey out of the land of slavery and on their way to freedom - on their way to the land that God had promised to give them.

Even before the event happened, God had told Moses to instruct the Israelites to always observe this feast. Each year they were to tell their children the story of how God had passed over their homes, and then had brought them out of their slavery. And this is what we find Jesus doing in Mark 14 verses 12 and following. On the day the Passover meal was to be eaten, Jesus sends two of his disciples to go and make the necessary preparation.

It is after the telling of the Passover story - the story of God saving their firstborns and bringing his people out of slavery and giving them a new way of life - that Jesus takes the bread, gives thanks and gives it to his disciples. He then does the same with the cup of blessing - followed by the words: "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God. With these words, Jesus is once again telling his disciples that he is going to die. Jesus and his disciples then sing a hymn and leave for the Mount of Olives. Now for us, who are unfamiliar with the order of the Passover meal, we think nothing of this - we assume the meal is over - and they

are on their way. But those familiar with the Passover meal, would realize that in the leaving after the song - Jesus is skipping the drinking of the traditional fourth cup. It is when he is on the cross, when he cries out that he is thirsty, and he is offered "sour wine" on a sponge sitting on top of a hyssop branch - the same hyssop branch the Israelites used to paint the lamb's blood on their door frames with for Passover - that is the time when Jesus is offered the fourth cup to drink.

For it is after he tastes this sour wine, that Jesus cries out: "It is finished." Scholars believe that what Jesus is saying is that the Passover was now finally finished. The Old Testament scripture is now being fulfilled by his death on the cross. He, Jesus - God's first born, Mary's first born - a person without blemish - without sin, has died so that God will no longer look at our sins but as Psalm 103 verse 12 puts it: God will remove our transgressions - our sins - as far as the east is from the west. Instead of treating us as our sins deserve or repaying us according to our iniquities - God shows us compassion - God loves us - God gives us new life.

As the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5 verse 7: Jesus is our Passover Lamb. And as we are in the weeks of Lent - it seems to me that we would do well to remind ourselves and each other - of his sacrifice for us and what that means for our daily lives. What does it mean to us that Jesus left the glories of heaven to walk the dusty roads of ancient Palestine? What does it mean to us that he was betrayed for thirty silver coins; denied by one of his best friends and then deserted by all of them.? What does it mean to us that Jesus was taken before the high priest to be tried on some false evidence; and then later go through more of the same with Pilate? What does it mean to us when we think of the crowd shouting for his death - for him to be crucified? What does it mean for us to see Jesus hanging on the cross - his blood mixed with water coming from his side?

My hope and prayer is that each of us present this morning - will be able to answer that it means everything to us. For with his dying, Jesus saved each of us from certain death. It is only through the death and resurrection of Jesus that we can have new life - eternal life. It is through his death and resurrection that we are able to be free from our slavery to sin. And like the Israelites of old, we too, are asked to do something. No, we do not have to kill a lamb. All we need to do is leave our life of sin behind. Or using the language of one of the Church confession's - the Heidelberg Catechism - we need to experience a dying away of the old self and a coming-to-life of the new. We need to be genuinely sorry for our sin - to hate it more and more - to run away from it. And with joy in God - we do every kind of good as God wants us to do. Doing good: following the Ten Commandments or if you want to hear the words from the New Testament, listen to what Jesus is telling us in Matthew 5 and following - what we generally refer to as the Beatitudes.

As I noted earlier, Jesus established the Lord's Supper at the time of the Passover, when he himself was about to be slain as the true Lamb of God. In doing this, Jesus closed off the old ceremony of the body and blood of the lamb and established the new with the bread and wine of his Communion table. Jesus is the one who is truly able to

give us new life in him - all we need do is to believe in him and then we will, with the help of his Holy Spirit, live our lives in thankfulness for what he has done for us.

Before we draw near to the table of our Lord, let us confess our Christian faith by saying together the Apostles' Creed.

Invite people to come around the table with Explanation of the Passover plate

Yet we live in the time when the Jesus, fulfilled the Old Testament Passover, by becoming the Passover Lamb - dying for our sins - once and for all time. For we hear his words spoken on the night he was betrayed - when he took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.

Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

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 covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

Please join in singing: ***Worthy is the Lamb***

Receive God's benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.