

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Matthew 26:1-35

Key Verses: 26:26b-28

"`Take and eat; this is my body.' 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.'"

Up to the present point, Jesus had healed the sick, preached the kingdom of heaven and trained his disciples. All of Jesus' earthly messianic ministry, even one of his footprints or one of his words, is beautiful forever (1). Now, the Passover was near, and Jesus was ready to become the Paschal Lamb for the sin of the world (2), while the religious leaders were ready to kill Jesus (3-5). In this situation, if he had been an ordinary man, he could not have been mindful of anyone. But Jesus accepted one woman's pouring perfume on him and honored it as the anointing for his burial. In this passage Jesus especially teaches the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

First, a woman of heart (6-13). Look at verses 6,7. "While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table." Matthew and Mark mention that the host was Simon the Leper. In Luke, he is Simon the Pharisee. It remains as a most interesting question whether he was a real leper or whether his character was leper-like. Anyway, Matthew calls him "Simon the Leper." Matthew does not tell us who the woman was. But John seems to inform us that this woman was none other than Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. In Luke's story, the woman was a notorious sinner.

This woman came to Jesus with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. As we know well, Pharisees were manneristic and hypocritical. This strange woman came to Jesus disrupting their dinner mood. What's more, she began to pour perfume on Jesus' head, as a prophet would anoint a king. What an embarrassing moment for Jesus!

What was his disciples' response? Look at verses 8,9. "When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. 'Why this waste?' they asked. 'This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.'" To the disciples' common sense, the woman was so wasteful that they were angry at her. They said, "What a waste!" The more they calculated the cost of the perfume, the more upset they became. They said, "This money could have been used for the poor," and so on. But their real motive in saying this came from their pragmatism. According to John, the one who said this was Judas Iscariot, and he was a thief (Jn 12:4-6).

What did Jesus say to them? Look at verses 10,11. "Aware of this, Jesus said to them, 'Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.'" Here Jesus is saying that there are some things which they can do at any time, but there are some things which

can be done only once. The disciples were anxious to help the poor, but they could do that anytime. Pouring perfume on Jesus' head or giving one's heart to him could be done only once. This the woman did.

Look at verse 12. "When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial." Jesus regarded her pouring perfume on him as an act of love. Jesus credited her pouring perfume as the anointing for his burial. Jesus also said that it is an event to be remembered forever in world salvation history. Verse 13 reads, "I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Why did Jesus regard her so highly? It was because she was a woman of heart. Jesus sees the heart. As we know well, the woman was known as a public sinner, along with the tax collectors. According to Mark 14:5, her perfume was worth a year's wages. She must have worked hard in various places to save this amount of money. They say that to Jewish women, perfume was essential in preparing for marriage. So this perfume must have been for her own marriage. But this woman took the most precious thing she had and gave it to Jesus. In reality, she gave her heart of love to Jesus. It was because Jesus loved her first. How did Jesus love her first? It was through his grace of forgiveness of sins. Luke 7:47a says, "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much." In the past, she lived under the power of sin. But since she met Jesus, she experienced the grace of God in heaven, the grace of forgiveness of sins. She accepted this grace in her heart and was thankful.

Second, a smart man, Judas Iscariot (14-16). Then one of the Twelve--the one called Judas Iscariot--went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" After receiving thirty silver coins, Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. Judas Iscariot was a most trusted one because he was the treasurer of Jesus' company. But he betrayed Jesus.

We should not make a hasty conclusion about Judas' betrayal. Judas Iscariot knew that Jesus had divine power, but according to his own premonition, Jesus looked helpless. Then suddenly, the world looked too dark. He was overwhelmed by fear. When he was caught by fear, he was beside himself. Then the devil came into his heart through his groundless fear. He began to be driven by the power of the devil. In his helplessness, he was looking for a way to get out of the situation. So he went to the religious leaders and made a dreadful deal. His problem was that he had no God in him. Jesus had revealed to him personally that he was the Son of God. Jesus had taught him the hope of the kingdom of God and the secrets of the kingdom of God. But Judas never accepted Jesus' teachings from his heart. He remained as a smart and godless man. It was a crucial moment of making a decision for his life. But he was helpless to do anything. A godless life is not a small matter.

Third, Jesus appeals to Judas to repent (17-25). Look at verse 17. "On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?'" This verse plainly tells us that the disciples celebrated the Passover regularly. The Passover was the greatest day

for the Israelites. During their 430 years of slavery in Egypt, the Israelites ate the bread of adversity and drank the water of affliction. But God remembered his covenant with Abraham and decided to deliver them. In order to deliver his people from Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, God inflicted ten plagues on the Egyptians. The last one was the plague of death on all the firstborn, both men and animals. At that time, the Israelites were to take some of the blood of the lamb and put it on the doorposts of their houses, so that the blood would be a sign for the angel of death to pass over them when he struck Egypt. They slaughtered young lambs and put the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. When they obeyed, the angel of death passed over them. In this way, they were delivered from Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. In this way, God enabled them to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness (Lk 1:74,75). This is the meaning of the Passover.

Jesus wanted to celebrate the Passover with his disciples and said in verse 18, "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.'" The disciples could prepare the Passover meal when they did as Jesus had instructed them (18,19).

At the table with the Twelve, while they were eating, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me" (21). It is quite unbelievable that there would be a betrayer among the apostolic band. Even if there was, it was terribly hard for Jesus to talk about betrayal at the Passover meal. Yet Jesus could not but say this so that he might lead Judas to repentance. Jesus could have used his power to make him utterly powerless to do anything. But Jesus did not do so. He made a most painful appeal out of his divine love. At this, the disciples were very sad and began to say to him one by one, "Surely not I, Lord?"

Look at verse 23. "Jesus replied, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.'" The Last Supper was a picture of the heavenly banquet (Rev 3:20). Jesus did not exclude Judas from the love feast. Jesus included him in the Last Supper, though he knew what Judas was going to do secretly. Jesus made an appeal to him by sharing the Last Supper with him. It was to lead him to repentance.

Look at verse 24. "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." This verse teaches us a most significant spiritual lesson. When God made man, God gave man the absolute freedom of choice. In any case, God does not coerce; God only appeals. On the other hand, man has an absolute responsibility for his own choice. If a man chooses to serve God, he has to decide to do so.

Jesus is God. So he gave Judas the chance to make a choice. But Judas, who was poisoned by the devil, made a wrong choice. Even though he made a wrong decision, he tried to mask himself and cheated his conscience, saying, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" But Jesus said, "Yes, it is you." Many people pretend that they have made no choice at all; but it is self-deception. Each person has made a choice, whether he acknowledges it or not.

Fourth, the blood of the covenant (26-30). Look at verse 26. "While

they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'" The bread of the Passover was to remind the Jews of the bread of the affliction and anguish of Egypt. The bread was to remind them of the unleavened bread they ate the very night they made the exodus. When Jesus said, "Take and eat; this is my body," he was relating the unleavened bread to himself. Those who do not eat the bread that Jesus gives cannot experience personal salvation. There are many who live a life of bitter complaint. They are spiritually hungry people. They are all those who have not experienced personal salvation. They must come to Jesus to eat the bread that Jesus gives. The bread that Jesus gives satisfies men's souls. John 6:35 says, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Jesus satisfies our souls and helps us experience personal salvation.

Look at verses 27,28. "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.'" In the Old Testament, the blood of the lamb for the forgiveness of sins was nothing but a ritual. But it was an exact picture of the Lamb of God. Before shedding his blood, Jesus told them of his blood of the covenant. Whoever believes the efficacy of the blood of Jesus receives the grace of forgiveness of sins. Those who do not receive the grace of forgiveness of sins through his blood of the covenant remain as unforgiven sinners. They live in fear and weariness, like the Israelites in the slavery of Egypt. In order to give us the grace of forgiveness of sins, Jesus became the Lamb of God. John the Baptist cried out in John 1:29, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus is the Lamb of God. Praise Jesus!

There are many people who are most afraid of being changed from their sinful way of life, assuming that they will lose the pleasures of sins. They are spiritually very sick people. Only the blood of Jesus changes a person's inner man. Peter was a man who was hard to be changed. But he was changed by the blood of Jesus and said in 1 Peter 1:18,19, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." Those who believe in his blood of the covenant inherit the kingdom of heaven, and there they will enjoy the heavenly feast (29). At this moment, let's accept his blood of the covenant in our hearts.

Fifth, the disciples will scatter (31). In this part Jesus predicts the top disciple Peter's denial. It is unbelievable that at the time of Jesus' suffering, the top disciple Peter would deny him. But Jesus said in verse 31, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'" Jesus recognized their human loyalty for him, but he teaches them that human loyalty has great limitation. Why did Jesus predict Peter's denial? Jesus said this because it was to fulfill the Scripture: "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones" (Zech 13:7b). The disciples were like a flock of sheep to Jesus. When the sheep lose their shepherd, they all scatter before brutal animals. This

hardship would come upon his disciples. But Jesus said this so that they might prepare their hearts to confront hardships to come.

Sixth, Jesus promises his resurrection (32). Look at verse 32. "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." In this verse Jesus predicts his glorious resurrection. Jesus gives them a glorious promise that he would rise again from the dead. Jesus gives a glorious promise that he would defeat the power of death and rise again. Jesus gives a glorious promise that he would destroy the gates of Hades and open the gates of the kingdom of God through his resurrection.

What was the disciples' response? The top disciple Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will" (33). His human loyalty to Jesus was admirable, but Peter did not accept what Jesus said to him about his atoning death and glorious resurrection. As a result, Peter despaired. Even though he spoke boldly, he was captured by fear. To this Peter Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times" (34). But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same (35).

In this passage, we learn that we must remember every day and every year God's grace of deliverance, as the Israelites commemorated the Passover annually. We also learn that we can be changed into new persons by his Son's blood.