

How Do We Remember?
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Matthew 26:17–30

Opening question: **How do you normally celebrate your wedding anniversary? What's been your most special anniversary celebration? What emotions do you feel looking back? How do you think about the future on that day?**

It was Thursday before Good Friday and Jesus' death. It was also the beginning of the festival of Unleavened Bread and Passover, a major observance for the Jews. In spite of the weight of His imminent death, Jesus was obedient in observing the Passover meal with His inner circle. In the course of this one meal Jesus would confront His betrayer, and institute a sacred remembrance we still observe today. This was not just a meal, or a religious tradition, this night was a celebration of a new covenant that would change mankind's relationship to God forever.

The Passover with the Disciples

¹⁷ Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹⁸ He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" ¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

- **What did Passover commemorate? What was the significance of unleavened bread?**
- [This] Jewish festival...commemorated the Israelites' liberation from Egypt at the expense of the Egyptian firstborn. Lambs were slaughtered, special meals celebrated, and an elaborate liturgy rehearsed.
- Extended families ate together on this joyous occasion. Jesus and the eleven (minus Judas) constituted such a "family," ...
- Jesus Himself would soon become the sacrificial Lamb to spiritually liberate all people from their sins. During this "Last

Supper” Jesus...turned the Passover meal into the first celebration of what Christians have come to call the Lord’s Supper (or Holy Communion or the Eucharist).¹

- Jesus sent Peter and John to make these important preparations. They had to secure the bread and bitter herbs, as well as the wine, for the feast. They would have had to find a perfect lamb, and then have had the lamb slain in the court of the temple and the blood put on the altar. The lamb would be roasted whole, and then the feast would be ready.²
- Luke (22:8) tells us, they were to follow a man who was carrying a pitcher of water and he would show them a large upper room.
- It’s debated among scholars as to whether Jesus had secretly made arrangements with this man prior to this, or if this was another example of His supernatural omniscient knowledge of the man and the room.
- Our lesson begins with verse 17. But the prior three verses really set the stage for the drama of betrayal that was unfolding:

¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. ³

²⁰ When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. ²¹ And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” ²² And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?” ²³ He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.” ²⁵ Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.”

- **What was the emotional temperature in this room even before Jesus made this revelation? What were the emotions after he said this?**
- It’s important that we understand the intimacy of how these men were dining together. We grew up viewing DaVinci’s Last

Supper with all of them around a dining table in chairs like Thanksgiving dinner. Not so!

- The key word is “reclining.” **Anyone know how this kind of dining worked? What was the physicality of it?**
- Reclining was the custom of the wealthy and usually practiced by most at festive meals. The participants would be reclining, leaning forward on one elbow either on pillows or low couches around a short table.⁴
- This was close physical contact. While reclining, one’s head rested close to the chest of the adjacent person dining, explaining the biblical phraseology of “being in one’s bosom” (John 13:23, Luke 16:22; Matt 8:11).⁵
- The interplay between them may indicate that Judas was right next to Jesus. John’s gospel indicates that Jesus dipped the bread into the bowl and handed it to Judas (John 13:26.)
- I always wonder, how could Jesus sit and dine so closely with his betrayer, knowing what Judas was about to do?
- It displays such love and patience on the part of Jesus.
- **How did all the disciples react to Jesus’ statement about a betrayer in their midst? Compare verses 22 and 25. What’s different about how Judas addressed Jesus compared to the others? What does that say about Judas?**
- **How could Judas live so closely with Jesus then betray Him? In what ways do some modern believers betray or deny Christ?**
- We think of Judas as the most evil, despicable traitor imaginable; but was Judas so far removed from some who seem religious on the surface?

A devotional by Greg Laurie makes an interesting point about hardened hearts:

Someone who is living a double life like Judas Iscariot will experience an increasingly hardened heart. Judas walked and talked with Jesus for three-and-a-half years. He was hand-chosen by the Lord. He had heard Christ give His greatest sermons. Judas heard the Sermon on the Mount and the Olivet Discourse with his own ears. He saw Lazarus raised from the dead. He saw blind men receive their sight. He saw deaf men receive their hearing. Judas saw miracle after miracle, yet his heart grew harder.

Those who think that simply going to church and going through a little ritual will bring them closer to God are in for a big surprise. Because the easiest place to get a hardened heart is in the church. As I have said before, the same sun that softens the wax hardens the clay.

Am I saying that some people shouldn't go to church? Yes . . . if they have no intention of applying what they are hearing. We can see miracles and hear truth, but if we don't have a desire to apply it, then our hearts can get hardened.⁶

Here's my take on this:

- Perfect church attendance doesn't equal a right relationship with Christ. Religion without surrender and obedience is fraudulent faith. It's really not faith at all. It's a hard heart disguised as a committed follower of Christ.
- Judas departed to accomplish his evil deed and the other eleven remained with Jesus. That's significant given what Jesus did next.

Institution of the Lord's Supper

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

- **What is the symbolism of the broken bread?**
- Jesus basically said: *"See how I'm breaking this bread? This is how my physical body will be broken and crushed before the week is out. Broken and crushed to pay for your sin and for the sin of all mankind. Accept this broken bread to remind you of what I've done for you."*
- Luke's gospel includes the phrase "my body given for you (Luke 22:19.) No one TOOK Jesus' life, He GAVE it for us (John 10:18.)

- Then Jesus took the cup and...gives new meaning to the wine, which he describes as 'my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (v. 28).
- **How does this relate to the Old Testament system of sacrifices?**

Exodus 24:8 (ESV) tells us,

⁸ And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Hebrews 9:22

22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

- **How is celebrating the Lord's Supper similar to celebrating our wedding anniversary? How do we look to the past? What emotions should we feel when the bread and the juice are shared? How does it point to the future? How can we avoid the Lord's Supper becoming just a boring church ritual? How can we keep it fresh and powerful?**
- *lian Campbell :...these elements serve both as a memorial, so that we will look back to the work of Christ on the cross, and as a means of grace, by which, through faith, we feed on Christ spiritually. There is also a forward-looking, prospective dimension to the Lord's Supper, as Jesus anticipates a heavenly banquet with his people in his Father's kingdom (v. 29).⁷*
- *John Piper writes: The Lord's Supper is a stark reminder... rooted in historical facts. Jesus lived. He had a body and a heart that pumped blood and skin that bled. He died publicly on a Roman cross in the place of sinners so that anyone who believes on him might be rescued from the wrath of God. That happened once and for all in history. Therefore, the mental action of the Lord's Supper is foundationally remembering. Not imagining. Not dreaming. Not channeling. Not listening. Not going into neutral. It is a conscious directing of the mind back into history to Jesus and what we know about him from the Bible. The Lord's Supper roots us, time after time, in the nitty-*

gritty of history. Bread and Cup. Body and blood. Execution and death.

³⁰ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

- It's likely their praise songs were from Psalm 115-118. With words like:
- *Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!* ^{8 14} *The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.* ^{9 21} *I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.* ¹⁰
- Even facing a horrible death, Jesus paused to praise the Father for the incredible plan of salvation that was unfolding before their eyes.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- In the course of one eventful meal we see the contrast of faithfulness and betrayal. The faithfulness of our Savior and the hard heart of His betrayer.
- The story of Judas reminds us that religion without surrender and obedience is fraudulent faith. It's not enough to look like a follower of Christ on the outside. It's about the condition of our heart on the inside.
- The faithfulness of Jesus was displayed as He transformed the Passover meal into the covenant commemoration we call the Lord's Supper.
- Jesus used the bread and wine as an object lesson to help us remember how He offered his broken body and shed blood to pay the necessary price for our sin. A horribly painful sacrifice that gives us eternal life.
- He still makes that offer to men and women today "*...this is my body, this is my blood FOR YOU.*"
- Those who have accepted this free gift of salvation are commanded in 1 Corinthians 11: "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes...Do this in remembrance of me.*"
- The next time the bread and the juice are passed, let it warm our hearts as we remember the painful price Jesus paid so we could live with Him forever!
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¹ Blomberg, C. L. (1998). Matthew. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (pp. 423–424). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 96). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Mt 26:14–16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴ Explore the Bible Commentary. Lifeway 2016

⁵ Shirokov, P. (2016). Meal Customs. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁶ <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/254-daily-devotions-with-greg-laurie/day/6>

⁷ Campbell, I. D. (2008). *Opening up Matthew* (p. 159). Leominster: Day One Publications.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ps 118:1). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ps 118:14). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ps 118:21). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.