

## Luke 22: 14-22 – The Last Supper (Maundy Thursday)

*If possible, have a small loaf of bread or some matzoh on a plate, and communion cups (or medicine cups) with cranberry or grape juice on a tray. Cover them with a light towel during the Bible study, but if people ask what's under the towel, feel free to show them and explain that "we'll be using them later."*



### Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

**Background:** We are now in Holy Week, or Passion Week, the days leading up to Jesus' betrayal, suffering, death, and then resurrection. Today is called Maundy Thursday, and it's the day Jesus had the Last Supper with his disciples.

The word "Maundy" comes from the Latin *Mandatum*, or mandate – a charge or command – because on this night Jesus told his disciples, "A new commandment [mandate] I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you."

### Focus of the study:

<sup>14</sup> And when the hour came, Jesus reclined at table, and the apostles with him. <sup>15</sup> And Jesus said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and share it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> And Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>20</sup> And after supper Jesus took another cup of wine, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. <sup>21</sup> But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me at the table. <sup>22</sup> For it has been determined that the Son of Man must die. But what sorrow awaits the one who betrays him."

### Questions:

1. *What special meal is this for the Jews? What did it represent?*

Passover: from Exodus 12 (see final page; read sections if you like. Briefly talk about Moses, "let my people go," the 10 plagues, the final plague being the angel of death that would pass over houses marked with the lamb's blood)

2. *What is happening in Jerusalem during this Passover?*
  - a. Jesus entered the city in triumph just a few days before, when the crowd shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"
  - b. The leaders of the Jewish people are plotting to kill Jesus, fearing his popularity with the crowd
3. *What does Jesus tell his disciples during this dinner? How is Jesus feeling about being with them?*
  - a. v. 15: Jesus "earnestly desires" to eat this Passover before his suffering starts
4. *What does Jesus do?*
  - a. Takes cup, gives thanks, tells them to share it (Passover involves 4 cups of diluted wine)
  - b. Takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it. *What does Jesus say as he breaks the bread?*

- i. “This is my body, given for you.”
  - c. Takes wine again after the meal. *What does Jesus say this time?*
    - i. “This cup, poured out, is the new covenant in my blood.”
- 5. *What is as covenant?*
  - a. an agreement, a promise, a contract
- 6. *What covenant was already in place between the Jews and Yahweh God?*
  - a. One of blood sacrifice, payment for sin.
  - b. Yom Kippur (usually in September), annual day of asking forgiveness for sins, the holiest day in the Jewish year (Kippur, related to Ke-Purim, “a day like Purim,” a day of God’s deliverance and salvation)
  - c. The sacrificial lamb took on the sins of humankind through a priestly ritual: Leviticus 16 (innocent life given for guilty life). It’s where we get the word “scapegoat”!
- 7. *Jesus says his blood is the new covenant. I wonder what Jesus means by that?*
  - a. *What did God’s old covenant/contract state?*
    - i. God forgives people’s sins through the blood offering of an innocent goat.
  - b. *So how could Jesus’ blood be a new covenant? What is Jesus saying his blood is going to do?*
    - i. Pay for the sins of all humankind, once for all, forever. The innocent life given for ALL guilty lives.
- 8. *What about the bread? I wonder what you think broken bread symbolizes?*
  - a. *What does bread do? What is it for?*
    - i. Nourishment; gives life; basic
  - b. “This is my body, which is given for you.” *How is Jesus like bread?*
    - i. His body was broken (beaten up, killed) on the cross; gives life.
- 9. *And what are Jesus’ very next words?*
  - a. Prediction of his betrayal and death – the beginning of the end.
- 10. *Everything has been going great; the crowds shouted with joy when Jesus came into the city just a few days ago. Now Jesus is telling them he’s going to die. How do you think Jesus’ disciples reacted to those words??*
  - a. Shock, struggle, denial
- 11. *Who here has celebrated communion / Eucharist / Lord’s Supper in church? What has been your experience with that?* (Sometimes people started when a child; depending on one’s church tradition, might celebrate it every day, week, or month)
- 12. *What do the physical elements, the bread and the wine, remind us of?*
  - a. What Jesus’ willing, innocent, and sacrificial death was doing and continues to do:
    - i. Be a payment for our wrongdoing before God; and therefore ...
    - ii. ... nourish us with life everlasting ...
    - iii. ... even, like the disciples, in the midst of our failure, fear, betrayal, and denial.

Today we’ll share the memory of the Last Supper together with bread and cranberry juice, to physically remind us of Jesus’ actions and their eternal impact on our salvation. This sharing of bread and juice is for anyone who would like to express their union with Christ and the church; but it is *not required*. If this is not part of your faith tradition or you are uncomfortable in any way, feel free to decline it.

Here are the traditional words spoken before communion: On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it, saying, "Take, eat. This is my body, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same manner after supper, Jesus took the cup. And when he had given thanks, he said, "Take, all of you, and drink. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death, until he comes.

As we pass around the bread and juice, feel free to eat and drink them whenever you like. [Repeat this as needed.]

**Break off individual pieces of bread for each person. Some people may take it in their hands; others may open their mouths to receive it. Feel free to say something like, "This is Christ's body, broken for you."**

**Then distribute the cups. Feel free to say something like, "This is Christ's blood, shed for you."**

- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

## **Luke 22: 14-22**

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## **Exodus 12:**

<sup>21</sup> Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. <sup>22</sup> Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. <sup>23</sup> For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when the Lord sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. <sup>24</sup> You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever.

<sup>25</sup> And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. <sup>26</sup> And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ <sup>27</sup> you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

### **“The Upper Room,” by Charles Wesley**

In that sad memorable night,  
When Jesus was for us betrayed,  
He left his death-recording rite,  
He took, and blessed, and brake the bread,  
And gave his own their last bequest,  
And thus his love's intent exprest;

Take, eat, this is my body, given  
To purchase life and peace for you,  
Pardon and holiness and heaven;  
Do this my dying love to show  
Accept your precious legacy,  
And thus, my friends, remember me.

He took into his hands the cup,  
To crown the sacramental feast,  
And full of kind concern looked up,  
And gave what he to them had blest;

And drink ye all of this, he said,  
In solemn memory of the Dead.

This is my blood which seals the new  
Eternal covenant of my grace,  
My blood so freely shed for you,  
For you and all the sinful race;  
My blood that speaks your sins forgiven,  
And justifies your claim to heaven.

The grace which I to all bequeath  
In this divine memorial take,  
And, mindful of your Saviour's death,  
Do this, my followers, for my sake,  
Whose dying love hath left behind  
Eternal life for all mankind.