

Maundy Thursday  
March 29, 2018

Grace Church, Lexington  
Fr. James'

Exodus 12:1-14a

Psalm 78:14-20, 23-25

I Corinthians 11:23-32

Luke 22:14-30

### Passover and Eucharist

We know that the Exodus was the defining paradigm for all of Scripture, old and new testaments. This institution of the Passover, the time when the angel of the Lord would pass over all of Egypt, including those of Jacob's enslaved progeny, who after 400 years had grown to a strong and powerful slave force in Egypt. And when the angel passed over, the first born of human and non-human creatures would die. It was the last, the deciding, the decisive plague on Pharaoh and his people so that they would be convinced to let the Israelite people go. The fail-safe for Jacob's or Israel's offspring was the sacrifice of a lamb or a goat, which they were to choose on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month, and sacrifice on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month. And when they sacrificed it they were to place some blood on the lintel of the doorposts around the front door of their homes. And when the angel saw the blood the angel passed over sparing the firstborn of that household.

So in future generations, down to the present, the celebration of Passover has been a significant feast day in the life of the Jewish people. That was just as true in Jesus day, and you will remember how he instructed his disciple to find a room and prepare for this same Passover feast so that they could celebrate it together. There is conflict between the Gospels as to whether this was actually the Passover feast. Perhaps we could read Luke as being preparation for the Passover and John as suggesting it was on Good Friday. Then, if that is so, Jesus words to the disciples in Luke that although he had eagerly desired to eat this Passover with them, he would not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. Perhaps he is suggesting foreknowledge that he will be arrested that night. But in Luke's Gospel, as we have heard, he does institute what we call the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, the sacrifice of his body and blood. It has overtones of the Exodus. In fact, I think Jesus was referring to the Passover preceding the Exodus when he gives them the cup and tells them to take it and divide it among themselves; that is, it was to be completely

consumed. And presumably so was the loaf of bread that he consecrated. In the Exodus you will remember that families were to completely consume the lamb or the goat and if they were not numerous enough to do so, they should plan ahead and share with another family that the sacrifice could be eaten completely on the Passover night. His reference to eating it when it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God is likewise a reference to the Promised Land of the Jewish exodus. That is, the Promised Land foreshadowed the full coming of the kingdom of God, as the celebration of the Passover foreshadowed Jesus death on the cross, the ultimate sacrifice, the sacrifice that would deliver indeed from slavery, sin and oppression.

“When we view the cross I think that somehow we must learn to see our complicity in it. We cannot dismiss this as an act by self-righteous Jews and brutal Romans. We must somehow understand the horrible fact that Satan sometimes uses religious people to accomplish his means. We distort things and before long we call evil good and good evil. Every time we allow sin to

seduce us with its distortions, we nail Jesus on the cross once again.

There is an old episode of MASH, which a rather cocky young pilot comes to the MASH unit because his plane has been shot down, but he is not seriously injured. He tells everyone in a rather boasting voice that flying really gives him a high. If I could not fly this war would really be a drag, he says. He brags that every time he flies a couple of missions they send him back to Japan for several weeks of R & R. The war to him was really quite lark.

Then one day a Korean child is brought to the MASH unit and her arm has been horribly mangled in an air attack. The young pilot is taken aback. Even though it was not his plane that did it, for the first time he must face his own complicity in the brutality of war. For the first time he sees things not from the perspective of 10,000 feet, but in the eyes of a child.

There is a danger in romanticizing the cross. I love the old hymns about the cross just as much as anyone. But the cross is not

meant to lull us, it is meant to jolt us.” [www.SermonIllustrations.com](http://www.SermonIllustrations.com)

While in Spain and in Paris, I was, as is everyone who walks the streets there, continually confronted by beggars. Some are deformed, some are loaded up with collections of things, some have animals with them who are being fed handsomely. I've always tried to help beggars, and homeless. I found myself walking by, avoiding eye contact, not wanting to do a little when so much was needed. But often I would be forced to pass someone just after buying food or eating a big meal, and it is not comfortable and I cannot forget Jesus example or that of Peter who had no money, but gave healing.

It was Sunday morning and I was walking along the Seine in Paris, my first whole day there, and I had passed many who were asking for help without helping. When suddenly ahead of me a tall, strong looking young man came towards me with two big sandwiches and I suspect a cup of coffee. And he walked right up to a homeless man who was not begging, but was stretched out on a bench sleeping. And he spoke to the man two or three times with

such compassion that it shook me. I turned to look back a couple of minutes later and realized that the homeless man had not responded, had not awakened, and the young man was gone. And then I saw it. At the man's head on the bench were the sandwiches and the coffee. This was such a loving, thoughtful, selfless, Christ-like act, that it has burned itself into my consciousness. It had to be that the young man had seen the homeless man and turned and gone somewhere nearby to purchase what he thought was needed. He wasn't trying to feed the entire begging population of Paris, but this one man had somehow spoken to him in his need, and provoked this loving act.

Somehow this smacks of the Eucharist to me. This was an act of love and thanksgiving. This demonstrates for me the love of Jesus. I don't know how it might strike you this Maundy Thursday evening in the year of our Lord two thousand and eighteen.