



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 26: 20-35

KEY POINT: Jesus invites all who trust in him to come and partake of the New Covenant.

FOR LEADERS

- Baptism! Our baptism services are coming up! If you or someone you know are interested in getting baptized or would like to speak to one of our pastors about baptism, reach out to your Campus Coordinator and let them know!
Emergence Connect! We are slowly transitioning our whole church from Realm to our new platform called "Emergence Connect." Leaders should already have been invited onto the system, and volunteers will be invited soon. If you haven't yet, set all of your Community Group's settings on Emergence Connect, adding your weekly meetings and add your group members into the group! Remember not to send out any invitations yet for events or usernames as we still work to onboard new folks into the system! Reach out to your Communities Coordinator if you have questions!

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video: Watch this week's community extras video!
[2] Icebreaker: Name a weird food that you actually enjoy!
[3] Opener: What stood out to you from the sermon this week? Did you find anything particularly helpful or eye opening?

IS IT I, LORD?

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 26:20-25.

Our passage this week focuses in on Jesus' Passover feast with his disciples, and the coming betrayal of one from among them (Judas). We also see a great example of a frequent theme in scripture – the balance between God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Jesus sees the unfolding events as the fulfillment of God's plan, as laid out in Scripture. He has already predicted Judas' betrayal three times, and yet Judas is not a mere puppet but acting of his own accord, fully responsible for his actions.

- [1] When Jesus warns his disciples that one will betray him, none of them point fingers, but instead ask, "Is it I, Lord?" in turn. What does this signal to you about your own faithfulness?
[2] Has there ever been a time where you, personally, have felt like Judas? Do those times come along more often than you'd like to admit? How do you return from this and continue your walk with Christ?
[3] How should our understanding of this passage impact the way we see our own sin in relation to God's plan for the world?
[4] Consider that Judas was most likely present for the drinking of the bread and wine...what implications does this have for the way we understand grace? What about the way we view the Lord's supper?

THIS IS MY BODY

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 26:26-29



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In the sermon this week, Ryan explained a bit about how the Passover meal was typically eaten, including the recounting the story of God redeeming Israel from slavery in Egypt. He went on to explain how shocking this meal would've been for the disciples when Jesus gave them the imagery of the bread and wine as his body and blood. This is a profound truth, in that it shows us how our life comes from Jesus' death.

[6] Why do you think Jesus chose this occasion in particular to explain the significance of his death to his disciples?

In verse 28, Jesus calls the cup his "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Take a moment to **read this promise of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34.**

[7] According to this passage, what are the characteristics of the New Covenant in Christ?

[8] In what way does this surpass the covenant God made with Israel when he brought them out of Egypt?

[9] How does the truth that our life comes from Jesus' death play itself out in our daily lives? What does it mean to be nourished by the body and blood of Christ?

[10] What does the imagery here in the Lord's Supper teach us about unity in the body of Christ? In what way(s) does the modern church life honor these truths and where might we be falling short?

THE FLOCK WILL BE SCATTERED

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 26:26-29

In our passage this week we see Jesus in full control of the events that are about to take place, even though it seems like chaos is about to break loose.

[11] In your opinion, why do you think that we, like Jesus' disciples in the passage, are so prone to fear even when we may understand Jesus' sovereignty?

[12] Peter's attempt at boldness eventually leads to an especially painful fall on his part. While the others will be scattered in fear, Peter will actually "deny" Christ. Can you relate to Peter in both his protestations of his love for Christ, and his shameful denial of his Lord? How does Peter's cautionary example inform the way we worship Jesus?

PRAYER

[1] Pray that the Lord would impress on your heart the privilege of being able to partake of the New Covenant.

[2] Pray for our church to reflect on the unity we find at the Lord's table.

[3] Pray for a healthy way to balance your own love for the Lord with the realization that you will fail him.

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LEADER’S COMMENTARY

- The classic passage that balances human agency with God’s sovereign plan in the death of Christ is what Peter says in Acts 2:23: “. . . this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”
- In the ancient world, a covenant was a formal treaty between two parties. It was enacted with a ceremony that varied somewhat, but often involved the killing of animals (the covenant sacrifice), formal oaths and promises, and the sharing of a meal. The major biblical covenants are as follows:
 - The Noachic Covenant (Genesis 8:20–17): God promises to not further curse his creation because of man’s sin, and to not destroy it again with a flood, even though man’s sinfulness will continue to increase. Mankind’s task is to continue to carry out the mandate we were given at creation, and to respect all life, especially human life.
 - The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15, 17): Because of Abraham’s faith in God, his offspring will be as numerous as the stars of the heavens, and will possess the land where Abraham sojourned. Abraham’s descendants will grow into a powerful people with their own king. Eventually, the blessings of this covenant will extend to all mankind, as Abraham will become a “father of many nations,” and “all the families of the earth will be blessed through him.”
 - The Sinai Covenant (Exodus 19, 24): In love, God has redeemed his people from slavery in Egypt and is giving them the blessings promised to Abraham. They will now enjoy these blessings, provided they are faithful to keep the law and are faithful to their role as a “kingdom of priests” to all the nations of the world. In the covenant ratification ceremony, Moses, sprinkles the blood of the sacrifice on both the altar and the people, saying, “Behold *the blood of the covenant* that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” This corresponds with Jesus calling his blood the “blood of the covenant” here in Matthew 26:28.
 - The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7): God selects David and his descendants to rule over his people forever. Although some (many) of his heirs will fail to live up to this incredible calling, God’s steadfast love for David’s house will maintain the throne of his kingdom forever.
- One well-known difference between churches like Emergence and the Roman Catholic Church is that Catholics believe that the bread and the wine literally *become* Jesus’ real flesh and blood through the saying of the mass. Although their *form* remains the same (wine and a wafer), their *substance*—what they truly are—is changed (hence the term *transubstantiation*). This goes far beyond what Jesus says here. As with all covenants, the meal that is eaten merely *symbolizes* the spiritual truths that form the heart of the covenant. Nowhere do the Scriptures teach that we receive God’s grace by eating the Lord’s Supper. To the contrary, grace comes through faith alone (e.g., Rom 3:28; 5:2; 11:6; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8). Jesus is speaking metaphorically when he says that the bread *is* his body and the cup *is* his blood, just like we see, for example, in Matthew 13:36–39 (“the sower *is* the Son of Man,” “the field *is* the world”).
- The Lord’s Supper symbolizes several very important spiritual truths. Among these is the unity of all believers and our equal standing before God. As Ryan said, both Billy Graham and the kid

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running around in youth group are invited to have equal share in Christ's body and blood. This calls to mind Peter's greeting in his second letter: "To those who have obtained a faith of *equal standing with ours* by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:1). This is also why Paul warns the Corinthian Christians that they are eating the bread and drinking the cup in an "unworthy manner." It's because they had been exacerbating the difference between wealthy and poor believers in their gatherings, treating those who were less prosperous as second class church members (see 1 Cor 11:17-34).

- Traditionally, the Passover meal ended with the singing of several of the latter Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113-18)—that is, Psalms that begin with "Praise the LORD!" (*ballelu-jah*). Most likely, this is what Matthew is referring to by telling us that they "sung a hymn" (v. 30).
- In verse 31, Jesus says that what is about to happen will fulfill Zechariah 13:7-9. This is part of a larger piece of prophecy in Zechariah 9-14, which contains references to a man who is close to the Lord ("the man who stands next to me," 13:7), and yet is undervalued, rejected, wounded, and killed by God's people. Interestingly, in 13:7, it is God who is commanding the sword against his shepherd, which again echoes the interplay in Matthew between God's sovereign plan and the evil deeds of free human agents. In the prophecy, the sheep who are faithful to the shepherd are indeed scattered and disciplined by God ("I will turn my hand against the little ones"), but end up being a minority who call upon God's name.

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,
against the man who stands next to me,"
declares the LORD of hosts.
"Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered;
I will turn my hand against the little ones.
In the whole land, declares the LORD,
two thirds shall be cut off and perish,
and one third shall be left alive.
And I will put this third into the fire,
and refine them as one refines silver,
and test them as gold is tested.
They will call upon my name,
and I will answer them.
I will say, "They are my people";
and they will say, "The LORD is my God" (Zech 13:7-9).