

In Remembrance

Exodus 12:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Saint Paul's Memorial United Methodist Church
1001 W Colfax Ave, South Bend, Indiana 46616
April 13, 2017 — Maundy Thursday
Pastor Tom Thews

Exodus 12:1-14 (NIV)

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸ That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. ⁹ Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire — head, legs and inner parts. ¹⁰ Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. ¹¹ This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

¹² “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals — and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

¹⁴ “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD — a lasting ordinance.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NIV)

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

In Remembrance

Albert Einstein, one of the most brilliant men who ever lived, at one time lived in a small frame house in Princeton, New Jersey. One day Einstein was asked for his telephone number. He looked puzzled for a minute, then asked for a phone book. I think it is interesting that Albert Einstein, a very smart man, did not even know his own phone number.

Was he simply forgetful? Not according to his associates. Albert Einstein simply refused to clutter his mind with inconsequential information. He remembered what was important to him, and mentally discarded anything that was not. His home telephone number simply fell in the latter category.

Einstein was not only brilliant, he was wise. There are some things that must be remembered; there are other things that fall into the category of clutter and can be discarded.

Our lessons for this Maundy Thursday celebration are about two events that were not to be forgotten. The first is the Jewish Passover. You know the story. The people of Israel were slaves in Egypt. Moses spoke to the Pharaoh in the name of God, saying, “Let my people go.” But the Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he refused to let them go.

So God said to Moses that on a certain night the people of Israel were to take the blood of a lamb and smear it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of their houses. On that night, God said, He would pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn child as well as every firstborn animal in that land, and He would bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. However, God said, He would pass over any homes that were marked by the blood of a lamb. It was a night the people of Israel would never forget.

To make certain that they would not forget it, God gave them a command. The people of Israel were to commemorate this event of the Passover annually. It is a remembrance that they have observed for more than 3,000 years.

Why is this important to us this evening? It is because Jesus and His disciples were all devout Jews. The meal that they celebrated—which we sometimes call the Last Supper—was a Passover meal. St. Paul describes that Last Supper like this: “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is [given] for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” This is why we are here this evening—to take the bread and the cup in remembrance of Him.

FIRST OF ALL, WE REMEMBER JESUS’ DEATH ON OUR BEHALF.

We take the bread and remember His broken body for us! We take the cup and remember His blood which was shed for us! The elements we receive remind us of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross of Calvary for us and for all who will place their faith in Him!

There is a name that pops up in headlines nowadays. Certainly it did in last year’s presidential campaign. It is the name Vladimir Putin, president of Russia. Putin is quite a complex figure.

In her book *When Character Was King*, author and former speech writer Peggy Noonan tells about a meeting that took place several years ago between President George W. Bush and President Putin. It

was their first meeting as world leaders, and Bush wanted to be sure they connected. Bush wanted to look into Putin's soul.

Bush brought up a story he had read about Putin. According to the story Putin's mother had given him a Christian cross that Putin had had blessed while in Jerusalem. Bush had been touched by the story.

Putin told a story in response. He had taken to wearing the cross, and one day had set it down in a house he had been visiting. Strangely, somehow the house burned down. All Putin could think about was that his cross was lost in the rubble. He motioned for a worker to come to him, so he could ask him to search for the cross. The worker walked over to Putin, stretched out his hand, and showed him that he had already recovered the cross.

Putin told Bush, "It was as if something meant for me to have the cross," inferring that he believed in a higher power. Bush said, "Mr. Putin, President Putin, that's what it's all about — that's the story of the cross."

Now I don't know what the cross really means to Vladimir Putin. I hope it is for him something real, and that it affects how he deals with important issues. But I know what the cross means to us. It means that Jesus Christ lay down His life that He might be a bridge between us and God. We commemorate His death each time we take the bread and drink of the cup. We remember that He died on our behalf. That is something we dare not forget.

A story once appeared in the inspirational magazine *Our Daily Bread*. It was about a man named Roger Rose. Roger faced deep sorrow as a child. His younger brother was fatally injured in a tragic accident. A seldom used dirt road ran alongside their home. Only on rare occasions was it used by automobiles. One day, however, as his brother was crossing the road on his bicycle, a car came roaring over a nearby hill, and hit him and killed him.

Roger said, "Later, when my father picked up the mangled, twisted bike, I heard him sob out loud for the first time in my life. He carried it to the barn and placed it in a spot we seldom used. Father's terrible sorrow eased with the passing of time, but for many years whenever he saw that bike, tears began streaming down his face."

Since then, says Roger Rose, he has often prayed that God would keep the memory of Christ's death that fresh to him! He prayed that every time he took the bread and the cup that his heart would be stirred as if it had happened only yesterday. He prayed that the Lord's Supper would never become a mere formality, but always a tender and touching experience.

This is what the Lord's Supper should be for us as well — a tender and touching experience. It reminds us that Christ died for us.

THIS, IN TURN, REMINDS US OF JUST HOW MUCH GOD LOVES US.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us,” says John in his first Epistle (3:1). We see that love demonstrated quite starkly on Golgotha’s cross.

Inspirational writer Max Lucado in his book *In the Eye of the Storm* tells a story of an angel that was seeking to understand salvation. Lucado writes, “He looked around the hill and foresaw a scene. Three figures hung on three crosses. Arms spread. Heads fallen forward. They moaned with the wind. Men clad in religion stood off to one side.... Arrogant, cocky. Women clad in sorrow huddled at the foot of the hill... Faces tear streaked.

All heaven stood to fight. All nature rose to rescue. All eternity poised to protect. But the Creator gave no command. ‘It must be done,’ He said, and withdrew. The angel spoke again. ‘It would be less painful...’ The Creator interrupted softly, ‘But it wouldn’t be love.’”

And it wouldn’t be love, not in its most extreme form. Breaking the bread and drinking the cup reminds us of just what the cross cost God.

It’s like a chart posted on the Daily Infographic website. It is a listing of what it calls “The World’s Most Expensive Meals.”

- For example, there is a restaurant in Tokyo where a bowl of Ramen will cost you \$110.
- The Capital Dawg in Sacramento, California serves up what it calls “The Ultra-Dog,” the world’s most expensive hot dog at \$145.99 . . .
- In Scotland you can order a bottle of beer dubbed “End of History” beer which it describes as Belgian ale packaged inside the carcass of a squirrel that has been taxidermied. It will set you back \$800-1,110 per bottle. Maybe that sounds appealing to you — drinking beer from the carcass of a taxidermied squirrel, but no thank you. Not for me.
- The most expensive meal on the list is found in Italy. It is Chef Viola’s “Louis XIII” pizza, loaded with lobster, caviar, eight different types of cheese, and seasoned with hand-picked pink Australian river salt. It sells for only \$12,000.

You and I will probably never partake of such expensive food and drink. But all of us can partake of what is undoubtedly the most expensive meal that can be imagined — the one that commemorates the death of God’s own Son. Think what the cross cost God — His most precious Son. But it was the only way God could show us the extent of His love for us.

This night we remember Christ’s death and we remember God’s love. But one thing more.

WE REMEMBER CHRIST’S PROMISE TO US — HIS PROMIS TO RETURN.

St. Paul writes, “The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which [given]is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do

this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

Christ will return. God’s Kingdom will come on earth someday “even as it is in Heaven.” Every time we eat of the bread of the Eucharist, every time we drink of the cup, we are reminding ourselves that hatred and violence will not forever reign victorious in this world. The Lord of love, the Prince of peace, will one day establish His reign over all the earth. Remember these things — remember His death, remember His love and remember His promise that one day His kingdom will be established in this world.

There is a story of a Persian King who was elevated from a poverty-stricken home to the glory of a royal throne. When he became king he sent his servants to the old shack where he was reared with orders to gather every relic of those days. The returning soldiers brought fragments of his home; many broken toys, his patched pantaloons, an old torn and tattered shirt, a crude wooden bowl from which he ate, and numerous worthless mementoes of his childhood. All these the king arranged in a special room of his palace, and each day he spent one whole hour sitting among the memories of his humble past. On the wall hung a prayer: “Lest I forget.”

There are some things that are of little consequence. If they are cluttering your mind, lay them aside, forget them. But there are some things that must always be remembered. Foremost of these is the cross of Jesus Christ. Take the bread and take the cup this night in remembrance of Him — lest you forget.

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