

**The Park Church**  
**Adult Study Group**  
**“Understanding Holy Week”**  
 Rev. Wayne E. Gustafson, D.Min.  
**March 1 – April 4, 2009**

**Thursday**

**Mark 14: 12 – 16**

*On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, ‘Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?’ So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.’ So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.*

Mark and John set the Maundy Thursday gathering differently. In Mark, this is the Passover meal – a Jewish meal celebrating the Israelites’ escape from bondage in Egypt – typically thought to be around 1200 BC. In John, this Thursday meal takes place on the day before Passover. The lamb to be eaten on Friday night is typically sacrificed on Friday afternoon – about the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. It appears that John is making the theological point that Jesus is now the sacrificial lamb.

“Maundy” Thursday comes from the word “mandate” because Jesus gave a new mandate or commandment: “that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”

Mark’s text includes the bread, wine, and “communion words”, while in John, Jesus washes the disciples’ feet and commands them to do likewise.

In Mark, we notice pre-planning again, this time for secrecy. Then we have the betrayal prediction and communion.

**The Last Supper – Mark 14: 17 – 25**

*When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.’ They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, ‘Surely, not I?’ He said to them, ‘It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.’*

*While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’*

### The Meal Practice of Jesus

He typically practiced inclusion of many classes of people in a culture filled with sharp social boundaries. He offers “Real Food” to his peasant audience. Jesus emphasizes bread as one of two major justice issues – the other is debt. Enough food for the day!

### The Last Supper as an Echo of the Feeding of the Five Thousand

We can see this as a metaphor for the just distribution and sharing of human resources. The point of the story is not magical multiplication, but distribution. The Realm of God is based in sharing and fair distribution.

### This was a Passover Meal

In the Passover, blood on the lintels and doorposts was a protection from death. The Passover represented freedom, so the “Passover lamb” is both protection from death and food for the journey – it is, therefore, a subversive meal.

### Body and Blood and the Death of Jesus

The point of Jesus meals – to insist on shared meals as the mandate for divine justice in a world not our own.

If one lives for divine justice on God’s world, one will usually die a violent death from human injustice in a world that refuses recognition of such ownership.

Taking the “broken body and poured our blood” of Christ means participating in the path that leads through death to new life!

“The Last Supper is about bread for the world, God’s justice against human injustice, a New Passover from bondage to liberation, and participation in the path that leads through death to new life.

### **Gethsemane, Prayer, and Arrest**

*When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, ‘You will all become deserters; for it is written, “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”*

*But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.’ Peter said to him, ‘Even though all become deserters, I will not.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ But he said vehemently, ‘Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.’ And all of them said the same.*

*They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, ‘I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.’ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, ‘Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.’ He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them*

*sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'*

*Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.' So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.' All of them deserted him and fled.*

*A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.*

### **Jesus Prays**

The use of the term, Abba, for God means something like “Daddy” or “Papa”, indicating an intimate relationship.

There has been great misunderstanding of Jesus statement about God’s will or desire. It was not necessary to God for Jesus to die. What was necessary was the confrontation with the “domination system” as an indicator of the Realm of God. Jesus is saying that God wants an end to the domination system, but it will take human action for that to happen. (That’s still true, today.)

Jesus also communicates how difficult it is for him to take the next steps – he wants the support of the disciples, but once again, they don’t get it.

### **Jesus Arrested – the disciples flee**

He is arrested by a crowd from the temple police – with clubs and swords. Judas needs to identify Jesus clearly because these “thugs” would not necessarily recognize him.

Later, the disciples who have now run away are restored to relationship – perhaps even Judas would have been restored if he hadn’t died – as reported in Matthew (Suicide) and Luke/Acts (horrible death).

### **Interrogation and Condemnation**

*They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands."' But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus,*

*‘Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?’ But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ Jesus said, ‘I am; and “you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power”, and “coming with the clouds of heaven.”’*

*Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?’ All of them condemned him as deserving death. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophecy!’ The guards also took him over and beat him.*

This text is the basis for much belief that the Jews were responsible for rejecting Jesus and causing his execution. But these temple authorities who condemned him did not represent the Jews – these were the collaborators with Rome.

It appears that Jesus confesses to being the Son of God, but there are two other possible interpretations. In Greek, “ego eimi,” can mean either “I am” or “Am I?”

The second interpretation is that these words have been added by the early Christian community that has affirmed Jesus as Messiah, Son of God. Remember, no one else was there from Jesus’ group.

Then Jesus’ language shifts to “son of man” (from Daniel 7) and may indicate that he is not the Messiah expected to lead a violent overthrow of Rome – rather he is the non-violent messiah. Daniel 7 represents the heavenly judgment against all major empires.

The final empire (Realm of God) is not “One like a beast” but is “one like a human being.” Once again, the anti imperial nature of Jesus’ (son of man) Realm is emphasized.

In this context, Jesus claim is clear. God has given the kingdom to Jesus and all are invited to enter it, but, that involves following Jesus through death into resurrection and a life here below absolutely opposite to the way of the world’s imperial normalcy.

### **Confession and Denial – Mark 114: 66 – 72**

*While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.’ But he denied it, saying, ‘I do not know or understand what you are talking about.’ And he went out into the forecourt. \* Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, ‘This man is one of them.’ But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, ‘Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.’ But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, ‘I do not know this man you are talking about.’ At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept.*

Markan Frame: Peter follows Jesus to the H.P.’s house. Jesus is interrogated and confesses his identity. Peter is interrogated and denies Jesus.

Remember that Mark is writing to Christians who had undergone persecution during the rebellion (66 – 74 AD) – so perhaps Peter is a warning about betrayal.

Three consolations:

1. Those who imitate Jesus are applauded for courage
2. Those who imitate Peter still have repentance/forgiveness available
3. Denials and Betrayals are not the worst sins against God – Despair (lack of faith in the availability of repentance/forgiveness) is the worst.

The material for this class comes from:

Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem. HarperOne. ISBN978-0-06-087260-1