

## **March 22, 2015**

### **Exodus 12:1-4 [5-10] 11-14**

1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 "This month will be the first month; it will be the first month of the year for you. 3 Tell the whole Israelite community: On the tenth day of this month they must take a lamb for each household, a lamb per house. 4 If a household is too small for a lamb, it should share one with a neighbor nearby. You should divide the lamb in proportion to the number of people who will be eating it. 5 Your lamb should be a flawless year-old male. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 You should keep close watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month. At twilight on that day, the whole assembled Israelite community should slaughter their lambs. 7 They should take some of the blood and smear it on the two doorposts and on the beam over the door of the houses in which they are eating. 8 That same night they should eat the meat roasted over the fire. They should eat it along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9 Don't eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over fire with its head, legs, and internal organs. 10 Don't let any of it remain until morning, and burn any of it left over in the morning. 11 This is how you should eat it. You should be dressed, with your sandals on your feet and your walking stick in your hand. You should eat the meal in a hurry. It is the Passover of the LORD. 12 I'll pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I'll strike down every oldest child in the land of Egypt, both humans and animals. I'll impose judgments on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. 13 The blood will be your sign on the houses where you live. Whenever I see the blood, I'll pass over you. No plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. 14 "This day will be a day of remembering for you. You will observe it as a festival to the LORD. You will observe it in every generation as a regulation for all time.

### **Psalms 116:1-2, 12-19 (13)**

1 I love the LORD because he hears my requests for mercy. 2 I'll call out to him as long as I live, because he listens closely to me. 12 What can I give back to the LORD for all the good things he has done for me? 13 I'll lift up the cup of salvation. I'll call on the LORD's name. 14 I'll keep the promises I made to the LORD in the presence of all God's people. 15 The death of the LORD's faithful is a costly loss in his eyes. 16 Oh yes, LORD, I am definitely your servant! I am your servant and the son of your female servant—you've freed me from my chains. 17 So I'll offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to you, and I'll call on the LORD's name. 18 I'll keep the promises I made to the LORD in the presence of all God's people, 19 in the courtyards of the LORD's house, which is in the center of Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

### **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

23 I received a tradition from the Lord, which I also handed on to you: on the night on which he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread. 24 After giving thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this to remember me." 25 He did the same thing with the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do this to remember me." 26 Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you broadcast the death of the Lord until he comes.

### **John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

1 Before the Festival of Passover, Jesus knew that his time had come to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them fully. 2 Jesus and his disciples were sharing the evening meal. The devil had already

provoked Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. 4 So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. 6 When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You don't understand what I'm doing now, but you will understand later." 8 "No!" Peter said. "You will never wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't have a place with me." 9 Simon Peter said, "Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus responded, "Those who have bathed need only to have their feet washed, because they are completely clean. You disciples are clean, but not every one of you." 11 He knew who would betray him. That's why he said, "Not every one of you is clean." 12 After he washed the disciples' feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, "Do you know what I've done for you? 13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you speak correctly, because I am. 14 If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. 15 I have given you an example: just as I have done, you also must do. 16 I assure you, servants aren't greater than their master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them. 17 Since you know these things, you will be happy if you do them. Jesus said, "Now the Human One has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32 If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify the Human One in himself and will glorify him immediately. 33 Little children, I'm with you for a little while longer. You will look for me—but, just as I told the Jewish leaders, I also tell you now—'Where I'm going, you can't come.' 34 "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. 35 This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

## **Sermon**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father,  
God's Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit:  
Amen.

What would you do if you knew this was your last night with your friends? If you knew tomorrow life would change irreparably – an impending move, a career shift, going away to college, entering a skilled nursing facility, or any myriad of other incredible transitions – how would you choose to spend this last evening with your friends? What kind of legacy might you want to leave?

Of course, this appears a loaded question as we commemorate this, the last night that Jesus spent with his disciples. We know that his last night is

incredibly different than the last night you hang out with your high school friends, or the last night in your first home. This night, the night that Jesus spends in the Upper Room with his disciples, with his friends, is the night before his death. And surely he wants to leave a legacy. Tonight, this night, is not about showing his disciples how to die well. That night will come all too soon. Tonight is about how to live well.

One of the things that we lose in the translation of Scripture is the significance of Jesus entering the upper room. Recall the story of Jesus' birth, and in particular that claim that there's no room for Joseph and Mary in the "inn." Here's the thing, though. The Greek word here for "inn," *kataluma*, is the very same word as "upper room." In that period, upper rooms

were great rooms above the pens for the livestock that were used for large group functions and guest quarters for traveling family. In all likelihood, when Mary was pregnant with Jesus, there was no room for her and Joseph in the guest quarters, just like the guest quarters here in Jerusalem where Jesus now dines with his friends. How fitting is it, then, that before he was born, Jesus was turned away from the upper room, and it took him a lifelong journey to get here. The Gospels use this word to help bring resolution to the story, to tie up loose ends, so to speak. In a sense, born homeless, Jesus' entire journey was toward tonight, where he finally enters the upper room. And in a few short hours, Jesus turns the place that denied him entrance into a place of radical hospitality.

Jesus enters the upper room with an incredible tension weighing upon him. He's been hailed on Palm Sunday as the conquering Davidic Messiah who would instigate a rebellion and overthrow the rule of Rome. Rather than march a militia into Pilate's teeth, Jesus instead gathers with a small cadre of friends to share in the Passover, Israel's meal of deliverance.

Recall that Israel celebrates the Passover as a remembrance that God led the twelve tribes of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, who gained freedom not through war, but through divine deliverance through the waters of the Red Sea. So, too, Jesus forsakes the potential for battle and instead comes to a meal of peace and trust.

Yet, he also comes to this meal as the one declared Lord. He comes in conquering, not with sword or spear, but with words spoken in peace, frailties healed with miracles, sins forgiven with grace. Jesus comes as Lord to this table, to the upper room, as one who might demand service from those around him. And who could blame him? These disciples all gather only because of Jesus.

And, yet, Jesus makes no such demands. Instead, he becomes once again their servant. Rather than expect someone else to take the humiliating task of washing feet, Jesus instead disrobes and wraps a towel around his waist – the garb of a Roman slave – and begins to wash the feet of his friends. Now, to us this already sounds, well, a

bit gross. We just don't touch feet in our culture. What you have to understand about first century Jerusalem is that everyone wore sandals. The dusty sands of the region would cake on the feet, ankles, and calves of travelers. Most homes of any means had a servant or a child ready to wash the feet of guests. This was no quick rinse, but a deep cleansing, a scrubbing of the road's remnants from the feet of those gathered.

Rather than demand the authority he deserves, Jesus instead embraces humility of scraping away the caked earth from his friends' bodies.

What would you do if you knew this was your last night with your friends? Would you wash their feet? That's the kind of legacy Jesus wants to leave with his disciples. That's the kind of memory, the kind of

remembrance, he seeks. Of course, this is mind-boggling. The disciples, and especially Peter, are so confused. What does this mean? Why would he do this? We've called him Lord, we've called him God's Son. Lords don't wash feet. Gods don't put on slaves' clothing.

But this one does. Jesus comes with only one demand. Not to wash his feet. Not to bow prostrate before him, but to love. "I give you a new commandment," he says. "Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other." And this kind of love looks like service. The love is full of intentional humility. Not demanding what we think we deserve

but instead seeking out ways we can serve. It's the night before Jesus dies. No one would blame him for a bit of selfishness. "Come on, guys, I washed the feet last week!" But no. That's not the kind of love Jesus knows, the kind of love that Jesus is. Love, selfless love, constitutes his very being. And so Jesus spends his waning moments finding ways not only to love his friends, but to teach them, to show them, how to truly love one another.

And on this, his last night with his friends, Jesus has a mission. Not to save himself, but to save the world. This kind of love doesn't seek self-satisfaction, but instead invites others to come participate in that love. This is how everyone knows we're disciples of Jesus. This is how we perform the kind of mission work

worth doing in the world. This is the only kind of evangelism that connects people with the heart of Jesus: if we love one another as he loved us in this act of washing our feet. This humility, this compassion, this selflessness...that's the legacy Jesus leaves. All too soon, he will break bread and share wine, and all too soon, his body will break and blood will spill. Itself another act of selflessness. The legacy that Jesus leaves us tonight? Be willing to stoop so low for others, to embrace the deepest sorts of humility, that through it we all might see the depth of God's descent in order to bring us salvation, to bring us peace, to bring us healing, to make us sons and daughters of God once again.

Jesus takes this upper room, a place that once denied him, and makes it instead the seat of his kingdom. Radical service in love of others. Amen.