

28 March 2024
Holy Maundy Thursday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“It’s All About the Lamb”

Text: Mark 14:12-26; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

At the Passover, it was all about the lamb.

Did you notice the disciples’ question to Jesus? ***Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?*** Not: remember the Passover, not celebrate the Passover, but ***eat*** the Passover. The Passover that from the first was all about the lamb. The lamb that was **slain**, the lamb whose **blood** was poured out and painted on their doors to protect them from the angel of death that passed through the land of Egypt that very night, and the lamb that was then **eaten**.

Every year after that, on that very day, God commanded the people of Israel to keep this feast. It was a Memorial Day for them. A day to remember all that God had done for them in rescuing them from their slavery in Egypt. But in all the succeeding years, when they would keep this feast, they would not smear the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their houses, as they had that night in Egypt. But they ***would eat*** the lamb. Passover was all about the lamb.

And so they did down through the generations, to Jesus’ day. And that night, the night when Jesus was betrayed, it was still all about the lamb. That wouldn’t change. But *something* would change. **The lamb would change**. It would still be all about the lamb, but a new lamb, for a new Passover, and a new deliverance.

So that night, they ate the last of the old Passover lambs. And after supper, Jesus gave them a new one. A *new* lamb to eat: ***take, this is MY body. This is MY blood of the covenant***, or testament. A mere lamb’s flesh and blood would no longer do. And there would also be a *new* remembrance: *do this in remembrance of ME*, Jesus said. In remembrance of what He was about to now do. And what He was about to do was **be the Lamb of God**, who would be slain and pour out His blood on the wood of the cross, that *it* now be for us our door; the door that would rescue us from death - the door from death to everlasting life.

And from that day forward, down through the generations, this new Passover would take the place of the old one. No longer would *many* lambs have to be sacrificed, for Jesus

poured out His blood ***for many*** - in the place of the many; for His blood was greater than the blood of all the lambs in the world. His blood now marks *our* door. His sacrifice would not have to be repeated. But what *would* still is the eating. Do this, *keep* doing this, Jesus said. This meal, this eating and drinking. That we become not just rememberers, but *participants*. That this night still be all about the lamb. The lamb that saves.

Because we need saving. Now, not all know that, and not all believe that. Some think they are good enough. Some think they can save themselves. Not the disciples. When Jesus spoke of one of them betraying Him, they *all* had a guilty conscience. Each of them wondered if it was going to be him. Because each one of them knew it *could* be him. Like when you see the flashing blue police lights coming up behind you in your rearview mirror, you think, ***Is it I?*** because it could be you; maybe should be you. Or when the boss says some of you need to do better, you think, ***Is it I?*** because it could be you; maybe should be you. But with Jesus, it *is* you. We have all fallen short in our Christian life. Our sins have been many and our good works few. Our words harsh and our prayers weak. Desires indulged and repentance neglected. It *is* I.

So to the disciples and to us Jesus says: ***take, this is MY body. This is MY blood of the testament.*** We eat the flesh of the Lamb, the Lamb of God, and we drink the blood that forgives, that saves, and we are participants in His salvation. For ***the cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?*** Indeed it is. This communion joins us to Christ and Christ to us, so that what we have done He takes upon Himself as His own, and dies for it. And what He has done He gives to us and we live. The curse of sin is lifted from us; we are no longer its slaves. We belong to another; we are united to Christ. For as St. Paul went on to say, ***because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*** The bread which is the Lamb. It's all about the Lamb.

So tonight we take our place at Jesus' Table. Where would Jesus have *us* go and eat the Passover? Here. A Table originally set for twelve, now set for a multitude no one can number. A Table originally set for Israel, now set for people of every nation, tribe, peoples, and language. A Table originally set in Egypt, now set in churches all around the world. To eat the Lamb. The Lamb of God who takes away your sin; and the sin of the world. And while many tables now, one day there will be only one Table again, a heavenly Table, and a feast that has no end. Just as the original Passover feast paved the way and pointed to this feast, so this feast paves the way and points to that feast, the great and final feast, with the Lamb not on the Table, but on His throne.

That night in Egypt was the seed that started it all. That night in Jerusalem, the fulfillment of the old and the start of the new. And this night here, our participation. In a new deliverance by a new Lamb for a new kingdom. And if you wonder, ***Is it I? Is it for me?*** Yes. *For you* who have been baptized in the sea of the Font. *For you* who have your death-dealing sins absolved by His blood. *For you* who have had the Gospel preached

into your ears and hearts. *For you*, now, the Passover Lamb to eat and to drink. *For you*, now, the passover from death to life. *For you*, now, a new life to live.

Now Jesus goes, just as it is written of Him, to the cross, where He will die. And now you go, just as it is written of you, to this Table, this altar, where you will live.

It's all about the Lamb.

It always has been.

So come, for all is now ready.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.