

Preparation

Luke 22:1-23

Series: The Climax of the Cross (Luke, Spring 2020)

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Worship: My Body, My Blood

Key Sentence: Utter evil is no match for the ultimate sacrifice

Outline:

I. Satan prepares his utter evil (Luke 22:1-6)

II. Jesus prepares for the ultimate good (Luke 22:7-13)

III. Jesus looks forward to the ultimate victory (Luke 22:14-18)

IV. Jesus prepares us for the ultimate sacrifice (Luke 22:19-23)

Luke 22:1-23 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. ²And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people. ³Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd. ⁷Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.” ⁹They said to him, “Where will you have us prepare it?” ¹⁰He said to them, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹and tell the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹²And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.” ¹³And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ²¹But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²²For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!” ²³And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

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The Biblical account of Joseph reveals a profound truth. You remember the story. Joseph was a favorite son of Jacob, but his brothers hated him. One day when Joseph was sent to check on them in a far pasture, they conspired to kill him, but then decided to sell him into Egyptian slavery. He served Potiphar but was accused by Potiphar's wife. He spent time in prison but was released when God allowed him to interpret Pharaoh's dream, seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. During the famine his brothers came to Egypt to buy grain, and Joseph, now prime minister of Egypt revealed himself to them. How was Joseph to feel about these brothers who had hated and sold him, who had caused him to live in exile and prison? Genesis 45 gives the answer. "Joseph said to his brothers, . . . "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life." Or as he says in Genesis 50:20 "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

You intended it for evil, but God intended it for good. We need to understand this truth as we read Scripture and keep it in our hearts as we live in a fallen world. What Satan and evil men intend for evil God intends to use for good. This is starkly seen in today's passage, Luke 22:1-23. Satan prepares great evil, as Judas agrees to betray Jesus, but God prepares even greater good, as Jesus prepares for his sacrifice. Utter evil is no match for the ultimate sacrifice.

In the recent chapters of Luke we've seen a growing conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. They were seeking to destroy him, but had not yet found a way. In this section their plot moves forward, and it looks like nothing can stop their diabolical scheme to rid themselves of the Son of Man. But at the same time, Jesus continues to move forward with His plan, preparing for his ultimate sacrifice. And his great and good plan will triumph. Utter evil is no match for the ultimate sacrifice. Let's look at the evil that Satan was preparing.

Luke 22:1-6 *Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. ²And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people. ³Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.*

In Judaism, in Jerusalem, in the life of Jesus, everything came to a climax in the feast of Passover. Passover is the greatest of the three ‘going up’ feasts in the Jewish calendar. It is also the most meaningful of the Jewish feasts. It celebrates the great redemption from Egypt, freedom from slavery. Nearly every book of the Old Testament makes that rescue a point of contact, a reference for what God had done and would do. At this feast, emotions and expectations of a Messiah reached a climax. Fears of Jesus by the leaders reached a climax too. Finally, unknown to anyone except Jesus, God’s timetable also reached its climax. It was no coincidence that this was happening at Passover. The great rescue from Egypt was a picture of the greater rescue by Jesus. God’s spotless Son would be sacrificed at Passover as the lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.

So, Luke tells us, “the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.” They were afraid the people would rally around Jesus and incite a revolt at the feast. Don’t think these fears were groundless. The history of riots at the great Jewish feasts was already well established, and the Romans were in the habit of strongly reinforcing the city when these great crowds gathered. It was at this moment that Satan entered into Judas. Luke carefully says that Judas was numbered among the twelve without saying he was a disciple. Judas may have seen Jesus as a great teacher, a potential king, maybe as the key to his own personal wealth, but Jesus cannot have been Savior and Lord to Judas in the way he was to Peter or John. As a result, Satan was able to get hold of him. He told Judas that the best thing to do to achieve his goals would be to betray Jesus to turn Jesus in. I don’t what motivation he used, but it’s clear Judas fell for Satan’s direct temptation.

Notice something here. The demons and Satan are not omnipotent or omnipresent. They are not gods, they are certainly not God. When Satan chose to personally focus on Judas, he chose not to be anyplace else. He was fully focused on destroying the Son of God. You might ask “Why?” Didn’t he know the outcome? Didn’t he know God would turn his great evil to even greater good? I don’t think he did. He’s smart enough to know but apparently he’s spiritually blind to the ways of God, to the power of self-sacrificing love. Even if he knew that God would triumph, I think he would chose to do evil for evil’s sake. I think in our own day, even after Satan has been defeated, he continues to promote evil, because he cannot comprehend anything other than evil.

So, at Satan’s prompting Judas went to the chief priests and officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. And these leaders were glad. Delighted. They relished the opportunity to work their evil through betrayal, double-crossing, treachery, self-deception, pride, and lying, and to avoid the risk of arresting Jesus in front of a great throng of his supporters.

History is filled with this kind of betrayal, if not a Judas then a Brutus, a Benedict Arnold, a Quisling to betray the right and open the door for wrong. But we don't need those famous examples. We find self-deception, pride and lying in our own hearts. It's far too easy to convince ourselves we are right, someone else is wrong, to justify sinful behavior, sinful anger, sinful abuse, sinful lust, sinful relationships. Satan uses pride and disappointment in others to lure us.

In this narrative at this moment, and in the course of history so many times, it looks like Satan is doing a fantastic job, that evil has not only prospered, but won. Think of China in 1950. Christian missionaries had worked in China for two centuries. Thousands had died as martyrs or from disease. Yet Christians in China were very few. Then, in 1950, as the communists came to power, evil seemed to triumph. A few more missionaries were made martyrs, and the rest kicked out. But those few remaining bold believers became part of a great work of God. By the 1970's we began to see that the Chinese house churches had multiplied five ten, even twenty times under the atheistic and persecuting regime. Today there are millions of Chinese believers. Some experts think that in a decade China will have the largest Christian population of any nation. The church in China continues to face persecution, but utter evil is no match for the power of God and the sacrificial selflessness of His people.

Maybe you've seen this in your own life. Events and circumstances that seemed good turned to dust and despair. No matter what you did, things just went from bad to worse, ending in disappointment or depression or tragedy. Satan does plot evil and knows no other strategy than to bring as much evil as possible on all who follow God. But Satan's evil is not the final word. God can and does turn these things around. Utter evil is no match for his ultimate sacrifice. Today's Scripture is the greatest example. God turned the killing of his sinless Son into redemption for multitudes enslaved to sin. Yes, Satan was preparing great evil through the treachery of Judas, and the cowardly maliciousness of the Jewish leaders, but God was preparing an even greater good.

In the next verses we see some of God's preparations. Luke 22:7-13 *Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.* ⁸*So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it."* ⁹*They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?"* ¹⁰*He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'* ¹²*He will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."* ¹³*And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.*

Even as Satan was making preparations for evil, Jesus was consciously preparing for a greater good to come through his sacrifice. While Judas is conspiring with the leaders of the Jews, Jesus sends Peter and John into Jerusalem to prepare for the feast of Passover. Verse 7 says it was the day of Unleavened bread, the day when the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. This was Thursday of Easter week, and Passover would begin at sunset. The chronology is not always clear, especially in John's Gospel. Some have said that Jesus celebrated Passover a day before the general population. But this verse makes no such implication.

Passover is a complicated meal, as those who prepare tables in the years we celebrate it can testify. On the Seder table are candles and plates, a tray with bitter herbs, saltwater, parsley, a boiled egg and horseradish, unleavened bread, and wine. All these play a role in the Passover celebration. Plus the Bible commands that the place be rid of leaven. So, it makes sense for Jesus to send Peter and John to prepare. But they ask "Where?" Jesus had no home in Jerusalem. He'd been going out to the village of Bethany each night. Yet it seems Jesus made an arrangement in Jerusalem, and a large upper room had been reserved. Jesus doesn't send the disciples directly there but says that just beyond the gate they will see a man carrying a jar of water. This wasn't normal. Women usually carried the water jars. But Jesus had either supernaturally or naturally arranged this sign so they could follow the man to the room. Is it possible this was done so Judas wouldn't know ahead where it was, so he couldn't bring the authorities there? Maybe. The upper room time was so important that Jesus in his planning didn't want it disturbed by the plans of evil.

Peter and John follow the man to the house and say to the owner: "The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" They identify Jesus as the teacher, which is what his followers often called him. The man, who probably was a follower, showed them a large upper room, all furnished. There they prepared for the Passover meal. Now this is a small incident. But it is included, I think, to make a contrast between the evil intent of Judas and the Jewish leaders and the redemptive intent of Jesus. "Go ahead - you prepare to betray me. I am preparing for Passover."

While Satan was preparing great evil, God was preparing even greater good. I believe that's true in our own lives. We are often weighed down by evil. We see Satan winning in so many areas. Marriages are on the rocks. Children are walking away from faith. Illnesses senselessly lead to death. Sin rages among those we trusted. Right and wrong are denied, morality is laughed at. On top of all that we see evil still inside us. But evil is no match for the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. It is because of that sacrifice that we can be sure God is working all things together for good, as he promised.

Jesus showed this clearly by his actions at that Passover meal. Verses 14-18 *And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”*

The hour mentioned here would be sometime shortly after sundown on 14 Nisan, the first month of the Jewish year. The Passover lambs have been slaughtered, and all over Jerusalem people gather in groups of ten to twenty to celebrate the Feast. Peter and John have made the preparations and now Jesus and the others recline at the table. Jesus says “I’ve wanted to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” He knew what was coming, he knew that he would be the suffering servant, the ultimate sacrifice. Also, he had just prophesied that there would be a gap, the time of the Gentiles, before all things would be fulfilled. So he wanted to eat this Passover, to reveal its significance, because he knew he would not eat it again until it found its fulfillment in the kingdom of God. This Passover meal was not going to be just something that looked back on the great rescue that God had worked in Egypt, but it looked forward to the kingdom, to the even greater rescue God was working through Jesus.

Throughout his ministry Jesus proclaimed the coming kingdom. In the Gospel of Luke he has said “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” He has said “Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.” He has said “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” He has said “People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. It’s that feast, with those people that he longed for. This Passover feast is, partly, a picture of that greater feast to come.

Now in the book of Luke an interesting thing happens. Luke, and only Luke, records another comment Jesus made before he gave the words of communion. Verse 17 “And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” There are four cups of wine associated with the Passover Seder. Today they are called the cup of blessing, the cup of deliverance, the cup of redemption, and the cup of praise. The cup mentioned in these verses is either the cup of blessing or the cup of deliverance. Jesus was looking forward to the blessing of the future kingdom, or he was thinking of the deliverance that would precede that kingdom.

He uses the rest of the meal to reveal his ultimate sacrifice. Verses 19-23 *He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* ²⁰*Likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."* ²¹*But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.* ²²*For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!"* ²³*And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.*

Jesus serves them the bread and the wine to inaugurate a new and permanent re-experiencing of his sacrifice until he comes to establish his kingdom. The breaking of the bread was a normal part of the Seder. When Jesus breaks this bread, it is late in the dinner, after the actual meal. When he gives thanks he would use the normal Jewish blessing: "Baruch atah adonai eloheynoo melech ha'olam hamatzoi lechem min ha'aretz." Blessed are you O Lord our God king of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

But having broken the bread, Jesus added something new. "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Many have argued that because he says 'this is my body' it must really be his body in some way. But I stand with those who understand him to be saying: "This represents my body. This is a reminder of my body broken for you." Why? Because, first, his physical body is right there. It would make no sense to the disciples for him to be reclining there in his body and then to say this is literally my body. Second, because the verb 'to be' is frequently used to indicate a representation. In Luke as we have studied it Jesus has said things like "The seed is the word of God. Your eye is the lamp of your body." Jesus uses this verb to represent one thing by another.

Yet I do not hold to a purely symbolic meaning for this sacrament. The bread is a symbol, but his body broken for us is a reality. The bread is a representation, but his presence with us when we celebrate is a reality. Max Lucado says "For some, communion is a sleepy hour in which crackers are eaten and juice is drunk and the soul never stirs. It wasn't intended to be as such. It was intended to be an I-can't-believe-it's-me-pinch-me-I'm-dreaming invitation to sit at God's table and be served by the King himself." Some Protestants have been accused of preaching the real absence of Christ in communion. May it never be. It's intended to be real: real, gut-level, remembrance of his death, real thankfulness for his salvation, a real experience of his presence and his forgiveness and his love. When you take communion does some part of you on some level hear Jesus say: "This is my body given for you." "I sacrificed myself for your salvation. I sacrificed myself that you might have a part in my kingdom. I sacrificed myself to defeat the utter evil which gripped the world."

We need a communion experience that makes a difference. Two mental attitudes can help. The first is recognizing our need. Have you spent enough time in self-examination and in Scripture to really believe that you need salvation, need a Savior, need Jesus to give himself for you. The second is recognizing our hope. Communion is not just something that looks back, but something that looks forward, and in looking forward to the fulfillment of God's kingdom promises, we find hope. The Lord's supper reinforces and recreates hope. I became a believer in a relatively liberal Presbyterian church, and often there wasn't a lot of content. But there was always content to communion. During those years I got into the habit of meditating on my own need and confessing my sins during the part of the communion service where we were passing the bread. Then, while we were passing the cup, I would meditate on forgiveness in Christ, on the redemption, eternal life and Holy Spirit he had promised. These two attitudes, recognizing your need and recognizing your hope are central to the right celebration of communion.

So just as Jesus took the bread of Passover and made it the symbol of his body, he also took the cup and gave it new meaning. Verse 20: "And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'" The cup that immediately follows the meal, in the Passover Seder is called the cup of redemption. Isn't it incredible the way all this fits together? Not just redemption from Egypt and slavery to Pharaoh, but redemption from death and being bought back from slavery to sin.

Jesus says: this cup is the new covenant. The Jews, of course, were familiar with covenants. There was the covenant with Noah, with Abraham, and especially the covenant with Moses. Those who were honest like the Apostle Paul would admit that the covenant of law had not brought righteousness. But there was also the promise of a new covenant. God says in Jeremiah "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke ³³For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD; I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

But this is not just a new covenant of forgiveness - its a new covenant 'in my blood.' The blood of a sacrifice was central to the creation of a covenant. When God made a covenant with Abraham, animals were sacrificed, cut in two pieces, and God walked between the pieces to ratify the covenant.

In Leviticus God taught that the life of a creature is in the blood, and “I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.” Jesus’ blood makes the payment for sin, and turns aside God’s wrath. The blood of Jesus that reconciles the sinner to the Holy One. As God said in Isaiah 53 “He poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. . . He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” That’s the fulfilled prophecy implied when Jesus says ‘this is my blood, of the new covenant, which is poured out for you.’

Again, how can we be unmoved when we see this sacrifice? The communion service is a time to remember our need; that’s the starting point. And to remember our hope; that’s where it will end. But most of all, to remember what he has done. How can we not be in awe when we think of his blood, poured out. Jesus, the only truly innocent and sinless man in all history died for undeserving sinners. His sacrifice assures us of forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life in the kingdom of God. How does he want you to respond? The answer is simple. Jesus wants sinners to trust in him. Jesus wants you to look to what he has done as the only source of forgiveness, redemption and hope.

The last section of text circles back to the utter evil we started with, by pointing out that this sacrifice, though central to God’s plan, is brought about by the tragic betrayal of Jesus. Verse 21 “But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²²For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!” ²³And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.” The human agency of betrayal was Judas, who, as we saw a few minutes ago, gave in to the influence of Satan. There is no question that the sacrifice of Christ was in God’s plan from before the foundation of the world - “the son of man goes as it has been determined.” Even so, Judas’ betrayal was a true betrayal, not just the act of a puppet, and he bore the guilt and the shame for that betrayal. When Jesus says ‘woe to him’ here he is not so much calling down judgment on him as recognizing the awfulness of the judgment he has brought on himself.

But utter evil is no match for the ultimate sacrifice. As we celebrate communion this morning, and every time we celebrate communion let us strive to remember that we have truly needed a Savior. Let us strive to remember that through his sacrifice he offers us hope. Let us strive to remember what he’s done, and in that remembering to set ourselves aside, and instead experience his presence.