



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Maundy Thursday**  
**April 9, 2020**

**RCL: Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14; Psalm 116:1, 10-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

### **Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14**

As made known to Moses at the burning bush, God has heard the cry of his people in Egypt after centuries of oppression and has set a plan in motion for deliverance. Several plagues have proven fruitless in bending Pharaoh's pride to set the Israelites free, and his empire will be stricken with one last and most terrible sign: every firstborn son in the land will die in the middle of the night. This tragedy will shake Egypt's familial and societal system to the core and establish that the God of Israel is the one true God, whose power is greater than that attributed to any other deity. But this ominous night is also the setting for the establishment of the Lord's covenant with all of Israel, a pivotal chapter in salvation history.

The meticulous instructions given to Moses and Aaron are directed at every household, each of which must secure for itself an animal large enough to feed all members. The lamb will be slaughtered at twilight at a specific time and then consumed in its entirety at a special meal before the new day. God also requires that the bread used for this supper be unleavened and that the people partake wearing travel clothes. In essence, he is preparing them for a journey away from slavery and towards a new destiny. Moreover, the Lord will command that this occasion be remembered for generations to come, so these directives are at once practical and ceremonial. The Passover is both the act of being set free and the remembrance of continuing to be counted among those rescued by God's own intervention.

Through a Christian lens, one cannot help but recognize a poetic foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice of the cross. With the blood of the unblemished lamb, God's chosen people are marked as those who will not know death. By his passion and death, Jesus Christ the Lamb of God defeats death and sin forever and fulfills the Father's plan to bring back humanity to himself. In Christ our Passover, we are justified and saved from the wrath of God (Romans 5:9).

- What does it mean to live in God's covenant?
- What can the contemporary Passover Seder teach us about God's covenant with Israel and our own faith?

### **Psalm 116:1, 10-17**

The richness of this psalm lies in that it is both a reflection and a prayer of thanksgiving. The speaker seems to know that the answer to the question proposed is simple: God's goodness cannot possibly be repaid. And yet, it is implied that the natural desire of one who has savored the love and mercy of God is to be his witness "in the presence of all his people." At the start of the Triduum, we are indulged with a preview of the joys of Easter, for in the expectation of Christ's triumph over the bondage of our sins, we can confidently sing, "Hallelujah!"

- Do you offer prayers of thanksgiving regularly? Do you turn to the psalms for inspiration?
- What images are evoked with the expressions "the cup of salvation" and "the courts of the Lord's house"?

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

Paul calls to mind the significance of Jesus' actions at the Last Supper as he reprimands Corinthian Christians who exclude the needy from their communion celebrations, an upsetting incident which makes him go as far as saying that what they are eating is not the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:20). By repeating Christ's words over the bread and wine, particularly as he refers to the "new covenant" in his blood, the apostle accentuates the calling for the Church to be a community. The very fact that we, in the example of Jesus, come together to break bread should entail a type of closeness and friendship that challenges worldly divisions. Moreover, our participation in Christ's body and blood is the remembrance of God's gift of redemption and a testament to his presence among us, so that we can, in turn, bring his love to others.

- Do you invite friends or acquaintances to join you in church?
- What are some practical ways to "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" in everyday life?

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

The opening verse summarizes an essential truth of the Christian faith: the almighty God, in the person of Christ, loves us. Regardless of whether we subscribe to the theory that John is in fact "the disciple whom Jesus loved," this Gospel is replete with references to the love of God for humanity, claiming that even the Father's giving of the Son is grounded in that love. It may be tempting to think of this love as generic – like, say, the love of a monarch for a multitude of unnamed subjects without any kind of real contact. But while his love is directed at the whole world, we do well to heed the words attributed to Augustine: "God loves each of us as if there were only one of us." Throughout his earthly ministry, Christ shows his love is always personal. Even on the night of his betrayal, he is keen on showing love to the disciples in a very tangible way: by becoming a servant and washing their feet.

How shocking it must be to them that the one they call Master should lower himself to perform such a task! Peter is so perplexed that he refuses to be washed, but Jesus insists he must if he is to have a share with him. There is a humility that Jesus requires in order for him to act in our own lives too, but pride, in the shape of guilt or feelings of unworthiness can get in the way of our own regeneration by his grace. And harder still is perhaps his request that we follow his example and wash each other's feet in a world where

aiming to get ahead of our neighbors is a way more popular inclination than serving them. But for Christians, love is not a choice. Jesus' new commandment establishes it as the sign of those that belong to him and the ultimate witness to his Gospel.

- Do you believe you are personally and intimately loved by God?
- Have you ever considered going on a mission trip with friends or family, or starting a mission ministry of your own?

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