

Introductory

This reading has parallels in Matthew (26: 17-19) and Luke (22: 7-13). Jesus washing the feet (John 13: 1-15) is the appointed text in for this day in TLH. In LW, the John text is appointed for Series A, and the Mark and Luke texts for B and C. In LSB, the Matthew and Luke parallels are appointed for series A and C. The foot washing has disappeared completely, and that's okay.

I will talk about the Sacrament quite a bit, but I don't like to talk a whole lot about Passover, and the churches who replace the Sacrament with the Seder are sort of missing the point. I have also used the Fourth Chief Part of LSC as a sermon outline, and the Maundy Thursday homily becomes a review of things most of your hearers already know, but it's not a bad thing to hear them again.

I will also generally shorten the sermon – I will call it a “homily” – so as to elevate the importance of the Sacrament on its day to shine most brightly. Ya, I get it, it shines brightly every time. We will do full Divine Service, which is generally what you do when you are serving the Sacrament.

We find Jesus in Jerusalem, and this chapter begins with the religious leaders plotting how to best go about arresting Jesus. They had decided long ago to kill their way out of the Jesus Problem. Meanwhile, we find Jesus in Bethany, not too far away, and Mary anoints Him with oil. Judas objected, and then sought out the chief priests to make arrangements to facilitate His arrest.

Textual Notes

12. The day, Mark says, is “τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν ἁζύμων, ὅτε τὸ πάσχα ἔθουον – the first day, when they were sacrificing the Passover Lamb.” The day is 14th Nisan, and the lamb is killed in the afternoon to have time to prepare it for the evening meal. The imperfect verb (were sacrificing) is “the Greek tense implying a custom,” says Ellicot. He likes “when they used to sacrifice.”

I see my Fresh Thyme Market has been carrying lamb as of late, and Whole Foods is advertising Lamb Shank for your Seder, and other grocery stores are talking about how they can provide the entire Passover meal kosher. I'm not sure how many Jewish families do Passover, but I suppose a lot more do the Seder, but then so do a lot of Christians, and I have thoughts on that.

The thing started out in the home with a single lamb for each family, taken from your own flock. It morphed into the Temple, with priests sacrificing many animals bought or brought from many places. Some estimates run up to 20,000 lambs slaughtered on that day in that temple, and that's a lot of blood and the like. I have read that the drainage system in Temple was heavy duty.

The disciples knew the day, looked around for the lamb, and λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ Ποῦ θέλεις ἀπελθόντες ἐτοιμάσωμεν ἵνα φάγης τὸ πάσχα – the disciples say to Him, where do you want us, having gone, that we should prepare, that You should eat the meal?" It's a lot of words, and the gist of it is that they are looking to their leader to instruct them what to do to prepare the meal.

The verb “ἐτοιμάζω – to prepare” is a fairly common word, it is used to talk about different kinds of preparing, and it is often used of preparing food, like here. We know that there was unleavened bread and wine, as the NT made clear. Any argument about other things that might have been there is from silence, but Food and Wine is on it. Not so much on the spelling of “Apostles.”

<https://www.foodandwine.com/holidays-events/easter/what-we-think-was-eaten-last-supper>

While the Last Supper occurred just prior to Passover itself, that doesn't mean that Jesus and the Apostles (sic) weren't enjoying a few Passover dishes. According to a [2015 report](#) by a group of Italian archaeologists, [a number of typical Seder dishes](#) made appearances at the Last Supper including bitter herbs with pistachios and a date charoset. Other dishes, like cholent, a stewed dish of beans cooked very low and slow, and olives with hyssop, a mint-like herb, were commonly eaten on a daily basis and might have appeared at the Last Supper.

13. Luke tells us that the two sent were Peter and John, and I know what you're thinking, and I have no idea why James didn't get to tag along. They were told to look for a man carrying water, and how many men would be carrying water in a city that size, and more people there because of the holiday. Women carried water, not men. One, that's how many men were carrying water.

When you see the man carrying water, follow him, and if that all sounds very cloak and dagger, that's because it is. They have long ago decided to kill Him, and their planning from the day before has become a plan now that Judas has offered his services to them. Jesus will submit to arrest at the right time, which is later this same day, but not until He has instituted the Sacrament.

14. So follow that man, Jesus instructs them, and whatever house he leads you to, say to the Master of the House, “Ο Διδάσκαλος λέγει Ποῦ ἐστὶν τὸ κατάλυμά μου, ὅπου τὸ πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου φάγω – the Teacher says ‘where is my guest room, where I should eat Passover with my disciples?’” Mark and Luke describe the room as “ἀνάγαιον – upper” and “μέγα – large.”

15. When you see that room, “ἀνάγαιον μέγα ἐστρωμένον ἑτοιμον· καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐτοιμάσατε ἡμῖν – the upper, large room will have been furnished ready, and there prepare for us.” The Altar Guild will

have set up the Sacrament, and we appreciate that. They are not to come back to Bethany, where Jesus and the rest are, but they are rather to wait there until the arrival of Jesus and the Twelve.

16. So far, the instructions of Jesus in response to their question about arrangements for the Passover meal. They followed His instructions, they saw the man carrying water, they followed him to a house with a large upper room, and they made the request of the Master, “καὶ ἡτοίμασαν τὸ πάσχα – they prepared the Passover,” the third time that verb is used in this pericope.

17. Later on, “Καὶ ὀψίας γενομένης ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν δώδεκα – when evening had arrived, come the Twelve.” Earlier, Mark had used the word “evening,” further describing it as “Ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης, ὅτε ἔδυσεν ὁ ἥλιος – evening, when the Sun had gone down,” so it was dark when they came, all the better to be more stealthy, and that’s when the Passover meal was eaten.

Edersheim has a different take on “evening,” and his description of the scene is eloquent,

It was probably while the sun was beginning to decline in the horizon that Jesus and the disciples descended once more over the Mount of Olives into the Holy City. Before them lay Jerusalem in her festive attire. White tents dotted the sward, gay with the bright flowers of early spring, or peered out from the gardens and the darker foliage of the olive-plantations. From the gorgeous Temple buildings, dazzling in their snow-white marble and gold, on which the slanting rays of the sun were reflected, rose the smoke of the altar of burnt offering.... The streets must have been thronged with strangers, and the flat roofs covered with eager gazers, who either feasted their eyes with a first sight of the Sacred City for which they had so often longed, or else once more rejoiced in view of the well-remembered localities. It was the last day-view which the Lord had of the Holy City—till His resurrection! Edersheim’s *The Temple and its Services*, pp. 194, 195.

18. In the normal dining posture of the day, “καὶ ἀνακειμένων αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσθιόντων – and they were reclining and eating.” The chair is a relatively recent invention, at least for the common man. The upper classes have had chairs since near the beginning. We like our chairs, but in many cultures today chairs are not important, and are not used at all to gather round the table at meals.

John makes sure to tell us that he’s closest to Jesus, and “ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι εἰς ἐξ ὑμῶν παραδώσει με, ὁ ἐσθίων μετ’ ἐμοῦ – Jesus said, truly I say to you that one of you who is eating with me will hand me over.” How does He know that? He might be using His Divine Omniscience here, but I don’t think He needs to employ divine superpowers to know what’s up.

What Judas has just done is a terrible thing. He was with Jesus for up to three years, in close proximity, 24/7 mol, one part of a tight, exclusive group. What’s more, Judas would have known Jesus, and to know Jesus is to like Jesus. For him to do Jesus like he did Jesus – there would have been some guilt there, guilt that would have been palpable and on display to anybody.

Jesus is not anybody. If experts can identify tells that somebody is lying, and if non-experts can read body language – and after 36 years of being a Pastor, I know when something is up – then such things would be to the Creator of all those things easy as falling off a log. What He says here and the way He says it – He seems to be pretty sure that He has it right about The Betrayer.

19. Upon hearing that declaration, “ἤρξαντο λυπεῖσθαι καὶ λέγειν αὐτῷ εἰς κατὰ εἰς Μήτι ἐγώ – they began to be greatly sorrowful and to say to Him one at a time, ‘it’s not I, is it?’” The cognate noun of the verb used here to describe their emotion means “to experience deep, emotional pain (sadness), i.e. *severe* sorrow (grief). [3076](#) (*lypéō*) is very intense,” even like childbirth.

It has always seemed to me odd that the eleven who were innocent of betraying Him would one by one seem to be asking if he is the guilty one. Odd because they each would have known that he was not planning on betraying Jesus, which is different from denying Jesus. But you look at the original Greek – this is why we are compelled and made to learn Greek at Seminary.

Questions that begin with “O” expect a positive (yes) answer. Questions that begin with “M” expect a negative (no) answer. The question here begins with “Μήτι, an interrogatory particle expecting a negative answer.” KJV has “is it I?” and I’m not sure why, and many of the LBT crowd follows up with the same, but a lot of modern translations get it right “it’s not I, is it?”

20. Jesus let each of them essentially declare his innocence, then told them “Εἷς τῶν δώδεκα – one of the Twelve,” and there’s only one who has not said anything, so they already know, and now the kicker “ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος μετ’ ἐμοῦ εἰς τὸ τρύβλιον – who is dipping with me in the bowl,” and if we had a visual, Judas would have been right now dipping bread with Jesus.

21. If we had the audio, I think Jesus is angry with Judas, who betrayed Him for money. He acknowledges what He has been telling them all along, “ὅτι ὁ μὲν Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὑπάγει καθὼς γέγραπται περὶ αὐτοῦ - the Son of Man goes as it has been written concerning Him,” and we see that He is actually in Jerusalem to do what He has to do, and it’s going to happen.

It’s going to happen, and it’s supposed to happen, “οὐαὶ δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ δι’ οὗ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται – but woe to the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.” That interjection “οὐαὶ – woe” is actually more common than I would have thought, making forty-seven appearances in the NT, and it’s never a good thing to hear Jesus give you the “woa.”

You might almost say that it’s the opposite of “blessed,” which is always music to the ear. Just because He has said – three times – what was going to happen in Jerusalem, and just because it’s going to happen, and just because it’s supposed to happen doesn’t absolve the guilt of Judas in doing what he did to Jesus. Everybody is going to die, but a murderer is guilty of murder.

Judas must surely have known that his betrayal would directly lead to the death of Jesus, and in that regard, he is no better than any run-of-the mill murderer. What makes it worse, and what

places Judas on the Mt. Rushmore of scoundrels, is that he had been there to see and hear Jesus in all His goodness, and yet he in effect pulled the switch – or hammered the nails – to execute Him.

Jesus concurs, “καλὸν αὐτῷ εἰ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος – better for him if that man had not been born.” Combining verses, we conclude that Judas hanged himself at the edge of a cliff or incline, that the rope then broke or became unanchored, and he fell some distance, bursting his bowels. Then he went to “εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον – into his own place,” presumably a spot in hell.

22. That must have been a fairly dramatic and quite traumatic scene for all involved, and now back to the meal, “Καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς – and while they were eating, He took bread and blessed, He broke it and gave it to them.” The bread would have been unleavened, and that’s what we should use as well, and why would you not?

It’s become fashionable these days to spend a lot of time talking about the OT Passover and which cup and what ordering and the like. I myself am not that interested, and the people in the pew are much less interested. You know how I can tell? Body language. Whenever I start talking about the OT, I get two – maybe three – paragraphs tops, then the body language speaks, and I hear it.

As He distributes the host, “καὶ εἶπεν Λάβετε· τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου – He said, ‘take, this is my body.’” Since you aren’t talking about the details of the Seder/Passover, you have time to talk about what this verse means. If I’m in a classroom, I draw four boxes on the board. In each of the boxes I write a different word: Bread, Wine, Body, Blood and then I teach the Real Presence.

Cover up the Bread and Wine boxes and you are left with only the Body and Blood boxes, which is what the RC teach, and we call it Transubstantiation. Cover up the Body and Blood boxes and you are left with only Bread and Wine, which is what the Reformed teach. Leave all four things uncovered: Bread, Wine, Body, Blood, and you have the biblical doctrine of the Real Presence.

I’m not sure about words like “consubstantiation” with regards to the Sacrament of the Altar because I perceive that it means different things to different people. “Real Presence” is the distinctively Lutheran term, and the one I always use. Whatever word you use, the important thing is to proclaim that the body and blood of Jesus are there “in, with” or “under” bread and wine.

23. After that, “καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες.– and having taken the cup, having blessed, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.” It goes without saying that wine was in the cup from which they all drank. In other places, it’s called “fruit of the vine,” an idiom for wine. Grape juice has no place in the Sacrament of the Altar.

We know the content of the cup because we know that in the Passover meal wine was used, and what ended up being the Sacrament started out as the Passover. Are we to think that Jesus decanted wine and canted grape juice at some point? And given the current often heated discussion about grape juice – or not – in the Sacrament, don’t we think God would have told us that?

Refrigeration is an even newer invention than the chair, and with that and pasteurization, you can keep juice for several weeks. But in that time and place, grape juice would last – go ahead and crush some grapes and leave them out at room temperature. How long does it last? They made grapes and other things into wine to mix with often iffy water, and also to preserve it past season.

Mr. Welch invented modern grape juice in the 19th Century. During the height of the Temperance Movement – the Christians got that one wrong. Prohibition brought us gangsters, but worse yet it brought the Federal Income Tax. Before that, a large part of the Feds' income came from taxes on whiskey, which mostly came from Peoria. Take away that income flow of the whiskey tax...

When I used to haul grain, whenever I hauled a load of corn to the whiskey factory in Peoria, I felt like I was doing something tangible, not like hauling to a barge on the River that ended up in a foreign country. I felt the same way taking oats to Quaker in Cedar Rapids, where they made them into Cap'n Crunch. There's a lot of old money in Peoria, but the whiskey is all gone.

Thomas Bramwell Welch was a New Jersey Methodist Minister and Dentist who could not bear the thought of consuming alcohol at church, or something like that. He used pasteurization to slow the decay of the grape juice, which also prevented fermentation, which is a kind of decay. Before that, there was really no question as to the beverage used in Communion, but since then...

I get the Reformed, and especially the teetotalers, who don't think anything is going on here anyway, and who maybe don't know much Greek, but I don't get the Lutherans. We think something is going on here, and we learn Greek, and we know that the beverage was wine and not grape juice, which is a different substance. Then why do I see so much grape juice among us?

I have always heard that even a small amount of alcohol – like even in after-shave – is enough to “set off” the alcoholic. I asked one of my members who self-identifies as “alcoholic” about that, and he said it's not so much that. It's more like you drink a small amount of wine and you're okay, so you think you can drink a larger amount, and there you go down the road that ends in the gutter.

So according to that explanation there is no physical “setting off,” but a conscious thinking in the brain that caused the little bit to become a big deal. If that's the case, then you just have to decide that communion wine is okay but going off the wagon is not. I saw the man at a wedding reception two summers ago drinking beer, he told me that he knows how much he can have, and that's all.

24. Of the wine, He says “Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν – this is my blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many.” The KJV has “testament,” which in 1611 meant what we would call “bequest” or “bequeathal,” as we would use it in the context of an inheritance passed down from one generation to the next, mostly father to eldest son.

I know that because I went to the Shakespeare online concordance and looked at the twelve times the word “testament” is used by The Bard, who died in 1616. So KJV had the right word for that

time, and it actually works better than “covenant,” which all the rest of the English translations – save one – have. Click on “parallel,” and you can look at twenty-seven of them at biblehub.

Scroll through them and click on “Additional Translations,” and Katie bar the door! The Reformed preacher makes a great deal of hay out of the word “covenant,” but your Lutheran hearers don’t want to hear it and will be bored by it. Simply point out the word, tell them what it means – maybe add that not everybody gets it right and this is why – and then move on to the meaning of that.

If you want to know more about the Real Presence, much has been written.

The first and best is Luther’s *Great Confession* AE 37 151ff. The Sasse book is good too.

25. He continues, telling them that He will not drink of this “fruit of the vine ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ὅταν αὐτὸ πίνω καινὸν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ – until that day when I should drink of it anew in the Kingdom of God.” The first recorded occurrence of this is when He stopped in Emmaus and those with Him did not recognize Him but did recognize Him “in the breaking of the bread.”

With the Crucifixion, prelude to the Resurrection, the Kingdom of God has proved publicly to be victorious over sin, death, and Satan. Since the Ascension, the Kingdom of God comes to visit each time the Sacrament of the Altar is celebrated. In that Sacrament we eat and drink of “the heavenly feast” with those saints who have gone before us, and we will one day be with them.