

Background for Week 13

We are now moving into a series of texts that will center around the Cross of Christ. In the readings for this and the following four weeks you'll notice a transition from Jesus' public ministry with mostly crowds to a more intimate setting where typically there are just a few others present.

He has, by this point, already finished his work in Galilee and has now been spending time in Judea and Jerusalem. It is here where he encounters immense hostility and eventually suffering, death, and resurrection.

As one finds in Luke, which contains the only narrative about our Savior as a child, Jesus is a faithful Jew, attending and taking part in worship (reader and preacher), and now he is observing their practice of Passover. This tradition, as you may remember from Sunday School and/or confirmation, is a time of blessings, songs, and sharing a meal composed of different foods that represent various parts of the Exodus narrative while recounting and celebrating God's saving act that liberated them from their slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12). An act that contained both a promise and a command. In addition, these meals also include a drop of either water or wine on the plate (symbolic of tears) in recognition of all the death that occurred.

Today's scripture begins after Jesus has been spending days teaching in the temple and nights on the Mount of Olives.

Text for this week: Luke 22:1-46 (*We encourage you to post your answers to these questions on our 100 Key Texts Facebook Page and engage in a discussion with the others.*)

1. Read Luke 22:1-46 in its entirety. What jumps out at you in the text? What thoughts are inspired by it? What questions arise?
2. Next, we'll break it down by verses.
 - a) 1-6:
 - 1: Writing to a mixed audience, Luke here is adding the more well-known term "Passover" for the Gentile readers. As the Oxford Annotated Bible comments, Luke's style of writing was such that people "from different religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds would find one level or another of the overall account to which they could relate and, thereby, find a point of identity and entry into the story of Jesus Christ."
 - 3: Some people consider Satan to be an actual supernatural being, whereas others consider the Devil to be only *representative* of evil. What were you taught as a child? What do you believe now? In Matthew and Mark, there is no mention of Satan at this juncture, and in John it comes up more as a side note. Here in Luke though Satan's part in the story is more central. It's almost as if the author is giving a reason or explaining how Judas came to betray Jesus.
 - Vs 4-6: Have you ever been betrayed? Have you ever betrayed someone? Money is a powerful

motivator, back then and today. What is your relationship with money? Notice Judas didn't want to do this in front of a crowd. Why do think might have been?

b) Vs. 7-13: Though tension was building with greater momentum and he probably sensed that the time was near when it would all go wrong, Jesus is adamant about participating in the important traditions of his Jewish roots. What are the special meals in your family? Why are they important? How do you prepare for them? Is God a part of your meal rituals? And if so, how?

c) Vs 14-23: The three terms we use for the same meal that we share as Christians are: 1. **Eucharist**-Greek word which means to give thanks. It derives from Jesus' prayer of thanks for the bread and wine, which he related to his body and blood given for those he loved.; 2. **The Lord's Supper**-celebrates the death of Christ, his presence w/the church, and his future kingdom. Title comes from Jesus instituting the meal as a practice for his followers to maintain after he dies; 3. **Holy Communion**-we believe we are connected in the meal with all the saints, both living and dead. The word communion is Latin based and refers to those united in a common church fellowship, tradition, or set of beliefs.

- What conversations do you have with others around meals? These verses, including 24-38, could be called Jesus' farewell speech. It is the last time he will gather at a table with those closest to him and talk over dinner. If you knew it would be the last time you would eat with family and friends, what would you say to them?
- Were you ever a part of a congregation that at one time celebrated communion only once a month or less? Many faith communities who are economically capable of having a regular pastor have transitioned to now include the sacrament in worship every week. What are the positives and the drawbacks in each case?
- What is your understanding of the Eucharist? Do you have any discomfort around the idea and language that we are eating Jesus' body and drinking his blood? As Lutherans, we believe that communion is a means of grace, a tangible way we experience God's forgiveness and life giving power, in and through which we are freed and strengthened for service. As Martin Luther argued Jesus is "in, with, and under the elements." He also recognized that we don't fully comprehend how exactly Christ is present, either in baptism or communion, but because he said, "This is my body...this is my blood" we simply trust his promise. In addition, we also believe that we are united with all the disciples, no matter their denomination, across the globe in the sharing of this meal. What have you experienced with the Lord's supper when visiting other churches?

d) Vs 24-38: Jesus is setting a different tone and example for leaders and the relationships between them and others than what was practiced in society. He's calling his disciples to live differently than what they've been taught by their culture.

- Where else do you witness or experience disputes about being the greatest?
- What has been conferred to you?
- In your words, what is the kingdom that Jesus refers to here? How does the language of 'kingdom' sit with you?

- How have you denied Jesus?

e) Vs 39-46:

- Vs 39-41: The Mount of Olives is often the place of prayer in the gospel. Reflect on your prayer life. What is your 'Mount of Olives'? How do you address God? The four basic forms of prayer are: supplication/petition, thanksgiving, praise, and intercession. What form do you most follow? What posture do you take when you pray?
- Vs 42-44: Luke uses very vivid and powerful language to portray the Redeemer's humanity. Anguish. Prayed. Earnestly. Sweat. Falling. Blood. Earth. The Son pleads for the Father to "take the cup away," to not let him go through the awful agony he anticipated was coming. In the same breath, he submits to God's will, rather than follow his own, acknowledging the Father's greater mission of salvation. Note: verses 43 & 44 are not found in some of the important early manuscripts so there is debate as to whether they were actually a part of the original text. They were known by second century Christian writers and reflect the tradition of the suffering Jesus.

For your prayers:

Dear God, you eagerly desire to generously give of yourself to us in Word and sacrament. Thank you for these life-sustaining gifts. May we follow *your* will. And may we imitate your Son as servant leaders living out the good news. Amen.

Next week: John 18:1-40.