

Title: “The Last Supper – Something not to Passover”

Purpose

To learn to appreciate more the many sides and the richness of the Lord’s Supper which is given to us as an UNFORGETTABLE SUPPER so that we might appreciate an UNFORGETTABLE SAVIOUR.

Introduction

Q. Have you ever had a truly UNFORGETTABLE MEAL? I can remember 2 linked to my marriage – when I proposed to Bola and also on the day of my wedding when we arrive at our honeymoon hotel there in Shepton Mallett.

Today I want us to look at one truly UNFORGETTABLE SUPPER and to do this I’m going to focus on 3 simple things:

1. SCENE SETTING
2. TABLE TALK &
3. GARDEN GRIEF

1] SCENE SETTING

It was the day they call Preparation Day and not surprisingly there were quite a few things that needed to happen if the Passover meal was going to be able to take place in the evening; that is after 6pm which was when the Sabbath day would begin.

The first thing to be done was to take the lamb that was to be slaughtered to the temple so that the priests could do this in the correct manner and then animal would be returned to the worshipper for it to be roasted in preparation for each household eating it in the evening.

4 days of examination

It is worth pointing out that the Lamb was to be selected 4 days earlier and then to be kept by the family and over this time they would be properly able to inspect the sacrifice to know that it was indeed perfect, a spotless lamb in which there was found to be NO DEFECT.

And this was very important. Jesus himself was seen over the days leading up to the crucifixion and he was tried and tested numerous times and never was he able to be faulted (though they tried very hard on this front).

Peter & John sent

Well verse 7 tells us that the day has now arrived and the following verse tells us that Jesus chooses two of his disciples to go and make the necessary Passover preparations.

Q. Do you notice who it is he chooses? Yes – it is Peter and John. Jesus appears to choose his best people for this task. Recall that Jesus had twelve disciples – they are called “The Twelve” (you can see that there at Verse 3 and at Verse 47).

But as well as having the twelve, he also had “the three” – Peter, James and John – and these ones are a privileged inner circle. And here two are they are selected for this important task.

Jesus, by his choice of disciples, in a sense is telling us that this next event – is *not* some minor event that does not need much of our attention.

A sensible question

Now in Verse 9 they ask a very sensible question: “Where do you want us to prepare for it?”.

This is sensible because the Passover needed to be eaten inside the walls of the city and at this time Jerusalem would be crowded with people and so every house would have visitors and here we have the 12 disciples plus Jesus and perhaps some of the women that were ministering to his needs. So all in all not such a simple question.

A miraculous answer

Q. Did you notice the miraculous answer that Jesus gives? Let me read Verses 10-12 ***READ***

There is no way that Jesus could simply predict all the details of what they are going to find as they make their way to the city.

For starters it was not a great likelihood that they would encounter a man carrying water – encountering a woman carrying a water jar yes – but not a man – this would be highly unusual.

When I read this, I couldn’t help being reminded of what happened back there in 1 Samuel and chapter 10 – let me read the opening verses ***READ 1 Samuel 10v1-7***

Jesus acting as prophet

Jesus was acting as a prophet and the disciples would know that their mission (no small task) was going to be successful because they would see that God was with them, fulfilling everything exactly as Jesus had said. In a sense they couldn’t fail even if they tried!

Just at a practical level for a moment –

Q. Do you ever sense God causing things to happen and then operate on the basis that all will be well? Perhaps there are times when naturally you are very anxious about something – and as you proceed into that which you fear, you start to see the signs that God is with you –

Q. Do you then continue to operate out of fear?

There is a lesson here – no doubt Peter and John started to relax as they met the man carrying the water jar – perhaps they began to sing praises to God after this point.

A large upper room

Notice the accommodation which they get - a large upper room. This suggests that they are being

accommodated in the house of someone more wealthy given it is a two-storey building.

There are times when nothing but the best can do – this, we get the sense, is one such time. Nothing is being left to chance, this is a special meal, a meal of great significance.

They reclined

Notice that the text says, at **Verse 14** that **“Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.”**

It was originally a **Greek custom** that people reclined to eat on couches, **but for Jews** eating normal meals they would sit at table, but when it was a feast occasion then they too would recline.

And we should understand that this meal was a more substantial affair than just something that would take perhaps 45 minutes or an hour.

Jesus’ attitude of desire

Now it is only Luke’s gospel which shows us the attitude with which Jesus comes to this last supper as we know it.

Verse 15 reads “And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’”

Put more literally, **“with desire have I desired to eat this Passover...”**.

The question that seems only natural to ask is why.

Q. Why would Jesus approach this particular meal with desire, with eagerness?

I guess if we stop and think what is coming up – where we are in the Passion Narrative – these events that precede him going to the cross – then we will get a better feel for things.

Last teaching session

It is right here in this upper room that Jesus will deliver (or at least begin to deliver) his final set of teaching to his precious disciples.

This teaching is recorded exclusively in **John’s gospel from chapter 14 through to 17**, four whole chapters of vital teaching which is especially aimed at giving the disciples the crucial foundation that they are going to need if they are successfully face what is going to transpire over the next 24 hours.

Even if you are not too sure you know what is in these 4 chapters, if I give you a prompt I suspect you will begin to remember:

- **John 14** – “Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”
- **John 15** – That wonderful picture of the true vine and the branches – His Father is the gardener, He is the true vine and we are the branches that God will prune to make them even more fruitful.
- **John 16** – Is where we gain additional teaching about the Holy Spirit – that Comforter that we are going to be given – that one who will lead into all truth, that one who will bring conviction of sin.
- & finally **John 17** – where we have that longest recorded prayer of Jesus interceding for his

disciples and for all who will come to faith in the future.

There really is a great pleasure in being able to pass on the wonderful teaching and truth of God and the gospel and Jesus never misses an opportunity to do exactly that and his compassion is such that Jesus longs to equip his people, his closest human companions with that which will stand them in the greatest stead.

Q. I wonder do you get a real kick out of passing on something of the truth of God's word to someone else?

Perhaps you have never had that experience. It really is something so worthwhile – because the Word of God is, as the writer of Psalm 19 says:

- perfect - reviving the soul
- trustworthy – making wise the simple
- right – giving joy to the heart
- radiant – giving light to the eyes
- pure – enduring for ever
- sure and altogether righteous, more precious than gold & sweeter than honey.

So thus far we have been setting the scene for this Last Supper, this Passover Meal.

Let me say just one thing more and then we will move across to look at the Table Talk.

John's gospel, prior to the exclusive teaching section (John 14-18) gives us another remarkable detail and that is what happened immediately after they all arrived and before the meal actually got underway.

Foot washing

John 13 (verses 2-5) says this: "The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

Only the day before – a meal in his honour

Only the day before Jesus had been at the house of Simon the Leper where a meal was being given in his honour, where Mary had taken pint of pure nard and anointed his head and feet and the whole house had been filled with the beautiful and very expensive fragrance.

Now Jesus is taking upon himself not the role that is rightfully his but he is lowering himself to the lowest place.

You know that Palestine was a hot and dry Mediterranean land and people soon got very dusty and dirty feet and normally the lowest servant would have the unenviable task of going around all the guests and kneeling at their feet and washing them.

But now Jesus is doing this role at this most important of festival meals. Jesus never stops surprising us – he is fulfilling what he says in:

Mark 10 verse 45 "...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life a ransom for many."

Ramps up our interest

Well this is the initial scene and straight away things are not turning out in exactly the way the disciples might have expected. In fact all the way from the outset things have been either miraculous or surprising – it does have the effect of ramping up our interest in what is to follow.

Let's go on now from the scene setting to the "Talk around the table":

2] TABLE TALK

Well as we said earlier this Passover meal was not one that was going to be over in an hour – they reclined and would eat a full meal – roast lamb was what was on the menu, unleavened bread, bitter herbs and wine.

If the Passover meal of Jesus' day was anything like that which has been handed down, then there were no less than 4 cups of wine which would be drunk at different stages – there would be various OT readings which would help to bring to the forefront the meaning of the meal and bring back to the memory the events of that first Passover and the exodus of the people out of the land of slavery in Egypt through into the desert and finally into the promised land.

Q. So what do we learn about their conversation at that meal?

There are four things that I want us to see:

- **FIRSTLY** – we see that Jesus adds fresh light and understanding to this OT meal.

The bread is now "My body given for you"

The wine is "my blood poured out for you" it is a "new covenant in my blood" – it is something "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins".

And both of these emblems – the bread and the wine – are to be partaken of in remembrance of him. As we read in 1 Corinthians 11 "...do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Just as baptism through full immersion replaced the covenant sign of circumcision, so now the Lord's supper, communion, is here replacing and completing the yearly Passover celebration.

- **THE SECOND** thing – we see the **BETRAYAL**. This is looms very large in the story of this last meal.

As Paul introduces the Lord's supper in 1 Corinthians 11 he starts "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,..."

This was a totally unthinkable **BOMBHELL** on the disciples.

Just try to imagine the scene – there they are in spacious surroundings for this amazing Passover meal – they are reclining at the table – Jesus is investing new meaning into the meal – he speaks these words (Luke 22 verse 20-21) “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table...”

I can only imagine that stunned silence that must have rippled around the room. John’s gospel captures the mood best: [John 13 verses 21-22](#) “...Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, ‘I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.’ His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.”

It was unthinkable that one of them sitting there right then, who was eating amongst them was a betrayer!

There follows a round of people saying to Jesus – “Surely not I?” and then when Judas Iscariot himself says: “Surely not I, Rabbi?” – Jesus says “Yes, it is you.”

Do you not think it is amazing that Jesus is able to function in this meal – to be able to wash Judas’ feet, to share his bread and wine with him, he has been living and walking, teaching and going around with Judas for over 3 years and he is going to betray him for 30 silver coins to the Pharisees and the leaders of the Jews. If you don’t feel anything just try and imagine this happening to you.

Do you not think that Jesus could have said to Judas privately – “Judas, you don’t seriously think I want you here at this meal – don’t you realise that I know what you are about? You better get out of my sight you just disgust me!!”

But Jesus extends grace and mercy even to the betrayer.

- We are going through the table talk and we have been given fresh understanding and the inauguration of something completely new. We have had the betrayal of Jesus by Judas.

Now we come to something that is exclusively in Luke’s account, let me read the verses from 24-29 *****READ Luke 22 verses 24-29*****

Doesn’t it seem just remarkable, given everything else that has been going on, that the disciples can stoop so low as to start arguing just one more time about this old chestnut as to which of them is the greatest!!!

Q. I wonder what it might have been that set this off again?

Well, it just might have been the seating order around the table.

We know, from what [John 13](#) tells us, who it was who was right next to Jesus on his right hand side: “One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, Ask him which one he means. Leaning back against Jesus, he

asked him, Lord, who is it?" – Yes it is the apostle John, one of the inner three disciples.

It really does remind you how much we need the power of God to touch us and change us, how much we need the Holy Spirit to truly transform us out of our typical fleshly and unredeemed nature.

- Now I did say there were four aspects of table talk.

THE LAST ONE – is where Jesus turns the subject around to what we might call "War and Weakness".

We are in a spiritual battle and our adversary Satan is constantly waging war upon us.

(Luke 22 verses 31-34) "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. But he replied, Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death. Jesus answered, I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

I don't know about you – but when you get together with your family and you have a nice celebration meal – I guess we try and avoid difficult conversations – we try and keep our topics of conversation light and we positively avoid things that might make the atmosphere a bit HEAVY!

But Jesus knows that there are real issues that are just around the corner and that these need facing up to.

- He has told them that he is going to be crucified
- He has told them that Judas is going to betray him – just as Scripture predicted
- Now he is telling them that Peter – "the rock" is going to be especially targetted by Satan – and permission has been granted to him – and not only that but Peter is going to falter, he is going to fall but that fall will not be final and fatal for he will turn back.

I want to move across to our last section – **1) we've** set the scene, **2) we've** done the table talk –**3) last up the:**

3] GARDEN GRIEF

For this we are now away from the meal, they have wended their way through the streets of Jerusalem and Jesus has been giving further teaching along the way, bringing them comfort and praying that great High Priestly prayer.

But now we are in the garden – it is a garden of tears – this is the place where Jesus is going to fight the battle for the cross. Yes it is here where Jesus must do business with his Father.

There's a lot of contrast here in this section in Gethsemane – we have disciples that are sleepy and fail to watch and pray as Jesus tells them to (and just perhaps it is late and just perhaps the effect of the sizable

meal are starting to take their toll, their eyes are very naturally beginning to droop as they sink into a satisfied state of sleep).

#1 Jesus' sorrow

We see from Jesus that even in his most distraught condition, he does not chose to be totally alone. He tells Peter, James and John to accompany him to a lonely corner of the garden where he then just goes a stone's throw beyond them.

Q. Now why does he do this? Well clearly it was so that we ourselves would be able to listen in and learn from how Jesus prays.

Jesus sorrow is extreme – Mark 14 verse 34 “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death...”

He prays, and not just once but three times (I suppose it would be more accurate to say that there are three tranches or periods of prayer – each lasting perhaps an hour).

Mark 14 Verse 36 “Abba, Father, he said, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

It is the most intimate and the most expressive of prayers. He is wrestling with his Father in prayer and Luke (being the doctor) adds the extra detail – Luke 22 verse 44 “And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”

It is so bad that we read that: “An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.”

The sad part of it all is that whenever he comes back to the disciples, those privileged three to gain their support and to know that they are praying for him – they are in fact ASLEEP!!!

It is an important thing for us to notice where the battle for the cross was won – it is here in the garden and it is here on his knees in conversation with his heavenly Father.

What a huge principle that is for us to learn.

Q. How many of our battles do we win before ever we get to them?

Well Jesus is not the only one that is touched by sorrow in the garden.

#2 The disciple's sorrow

It is only Luke's gospel that really gives any explanation to why the disciples are found sleeping when they should have been watching and praying alongside Jesus.

Luke 22 Verses 45-46 “When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, **exhausted from sorrow**. “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

We learn that they were “...exhausted from sorrow”. I guess it is easy to be hard on the disciples – but truly that night of Passover was one that had been such a rollercoaster of an evening.

Just run the stages by in your mind and put yourself in their shoes:

- it all began with Jesus' miraculous and prophetic instructions to Peter and John to go and get it setup
- then there was the unheard of FOOT WASHING episode when Jesus, the guest of honour, dons a towel and takes the lowest place
- there is the time where the disciples are so embarrassed because despite the FOOT WASHING they can still argue about who is the greatest
- then there was the remarkable reworking of the centuries old tradition of the Passover meal – this is my body, this is the blood of the new covenant do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it
- and if all of this was not enough – Jesus drops the bombshell of one amongst them who is going to actually betray as Scripture had foretold.

They go around the table playing the game of Russian Roulette where each disciples in turn says to Jesus “Surely not I?”

Finally Jesus hands the bullet to Judas Iscariot – “Yes it is you!”

- Even then the meal has not run its course – Simon you are going to be sifted by Satan and you are going to lose (well at least round 1)!

In fact, the Shepherd is going to be struck and all of you will desert me!

- There is so much raw emotion floating around that Jesus gives them 3 chapters worth of comforting teaching plus the longest prayer for them.

And so not so very surprisingly they are completely emotionally exhausted and they sleep like babies at Jesus most needy moment.

CONCLUSION

This meal that we ourselves on this Good Friday now come to celebrate is the most memorable meal that ever took place.

Yes something that was constructed with the utmost care and attention to detail, something that we are truly not to “passover”.

God has very purposefully given us an UNFORGETTABLE SUPPER

and all because we truly have an UNFORGETTABLE SAVIOUR.

May our God make this a meal truly memorable and truly meaningful in Jesus name - AMEN