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**DAILY  
BIBLE  
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# The Best Meal Ever

Monday, April 10, 2017

What is the most memorable meal you've ever had?

I have my most memorable meal every year. Each year in March, my wife and I go to dinner to celebrate our anniversary. We usually go to a nicer restaurant - typically out of town - and dress in nice clothing. I don't love these meals simply for the incredible food and drink - though some places create out-of-this-world food - but more so because this is an opportunity for Kaela and me to reflect on our marriage and the memories we've built. We talk about some of the funniest moments of our marriage. We talk about how God has grown us, and how our marriage has grown us closer to him. We reflect on life before kids and how much we now enjoy having kids. It is a special night that I cherish more than any other.

It's no secret that humans love food. Some might argue that we live to eat.

It's not simply the taste or enjoyment of food that drives us to eat with each other but also a deep-seated need for community that drives us to the dinner table.

As Perrysburg Campus Pastor Tom Martin said this past weekend, there are three key elements to a meal: the atmosphere, the menu, and those present with us. This has been a fact since the beginning of humankind. The first meal recorded in scripture is the meal that severed the relationship between God and man and set the stage for God's incredible redemption. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they chose to commune with the serpent - Satan - instead of God.

After God's people - the Jews - were enslaved in Egypt for 400 years, he sent Moses to free them. God instituted plagues against the Egyptians in response to Pharaoh's refusal to free the Jews. In the final plague, the angel of death came to Egypt and took the lives of the first-born sons. For the angel of death to pass over a particular house, there needed to be blood painted on the frame of the door. This blood came from either a young lamb or goat. Each family was responsible for preparing this animal for a feast - the Passover feast - after which they would flee Egypt. This meal has become an important one in the Jewish faith. In this story, we see that our internal convictions (the Jewish families having dinner) must match our outward actions (the blood on the door frame).

Fast forward to Jesus' life. In Mark 14:17-26, we read the story of the final Passover meal of Jesus' earthly life - the Last Supper.

While it is interesting to parse out the details of the Last Supper - like the theological connections between the Passover and the Last Supper - what we are going to focus on today is the emotional side of the meal.

During this meal, Jesus knows that one of his close friends, Judas, is going to betray him. He knows that this betrayal will result in his torture, crucifixion, and eventual death. He had spent the last three years with these men and women, and in just one day, it would be over. Of course, Jesus - being truly God - knew that this wouldn't be the end of the story; but he was also truly man, and so we can reasonably assume that he felt a whole host of emotions during this supper.

As you read the story of the Last Supper, try to imagine what the disciples must have felt during this meal. Though impossible, try to imagine what Jesus felt.

### **Mark 14:17-26**

<sup>17</sup>In the evening Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup>As they were at the table eating, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you eating with me here will betray me."

<sup>19</sup>Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, "Am I the one?"

<sup>20</sup>He replied, "It is one of you twelve who is eating from this bowl with me. <sup>21</sup>For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!"

<sup>22</sup>As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take it, for this is my body."

<sup>23</sup>And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup>And he said to them, "This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many. <sup>25</sup>I tell you the truth, I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new in the Kingdom of God."

<sup>26</sup>Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

How tense do you think this dinner was for the disciples when Jesus announced that one of them would betray him? Judas - the eventual betrayer - was sitting at the table pretending to be on Jesus' team. How often do we - as Christians - come to the table in the same fashion. How often do we participate in communion while holding onto sins that we are unwilling to confess? Jesus knew that Judas was holding on to this, just as he knows what we hold onto today.

When he begins the communion sacrament, Jesus explains that the bread represents his body that would eventually be broken for us. Jesus, in his true humanity, would have felt the emotional pain associated with Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial. He would have felt the emotional embarrassment of being mocked and spat on by the Romans. He would have felt the physical pain of

being bloodied and bruised before his eventual horrific crucifixion, where he would feel the spiritual pain of being separated from his Father.

Jesus then taught his disciples that the wine represented his blood. Just as an innocent animal had to be killed in the Passover meal, Jesus - the innocent Lamb of God - needed to die so that death could pass over us. How often do we forget that it is our sins that put Jesus on the cross? Far too often, we give ourselves a pass and think that it's other, worse sins that nailed Jesus to the cross. When we're honest, we know that it is our sin that did this to him. As Tom said, "If you were the only person alive, and you only sinned once, Jesus would've died for you."

As we receive the communion, we are committing to live for more. Knowing that it is our sins that required the death of the perfect Son of God, we cannot afford to continue in our lives with secret sin. We can't bear the weight of unconfessed sin; we were never meant to. Instead, we were meant to confess our sins. We were meant to lay them at the foot of the cross. In Christ's forgiveness of our sins, he grants us access to the final meal recorded in scripture: the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9), where we will dine with our Savior, freed from the power of sin and shame. We will dine freely with him, and there will be no need for a Passover lamb. He will have won, and our relationship with him in Heaven will be the prize.

Do you have any sins in your life that you need to confess? Do your outward actions not match your inward convictions?

If so, go first to your Heavenly Father and then to a Christian brother or sister and confess. He already knows, and your brothers and sisters want to minister to you through prayer.

As you think about the forgiveness offered to you through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, do you feel compelled to share that gift with others? Whom are you inviting to the Easter services this upcoming weekend? Who needs to hear about the incredible grace offered to them?

**Prayer:** Father, you are holy, righteous, and perfect. You love me even though I often come to the table - like Judas - not completely on board. Help me to get my heart right so I can live in the freedom you've purchased for me. Help me to share this message of freedom with others. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

*This post was written by Andy Rectenwald, the Director of the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# Who is #1?

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

Today is the Tuesday before Easter. The passage for today occurs on the Tuesday before Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Mark begins the chapter with the priests plotting to kill Jesus quickly. They hated Jesus because he was a threat to their power. They had to get rid of him, and they wanted it done before the height of the Passover celebration. Mark then juxtaposes this intense hatred with a story of intense love.

## Mark 14:1-9

<sup>1</sup>It was now two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill him. <sup>2</sup>"But not during the Passover celebration," they agreed, "or the people may riot."

<sup>3</sup>Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head.

<sup>4</sup>Some of those at the table were indignant. "Why waste such expensive perfume?" they asked. <sup>5</sup>"It could have been sold for a year's wages and the money given to the poor!" So they scolded her harshly.

<sup>6</sup>But Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me? <sup>7</sup>You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup>She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. <sup>9</sup>I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be remembered and discussed."

On this Tuesday, Jesus goes to Bethany to have dinner with some friends and the disciples. He knows what is about to happen to him in just three short days; and even though he's tried to tell the disciples many times, the only one who seems to understand what is about to happen is Mary, Martha and Lazarus' sister. The men all recline around the table, and as they begin to dine, a woman (who we learn from John's account of the story is Mary) comes into the room and pours an expensive jar of perfumed oil onto Jesus. There are many interesting aspects of this act. First, this is how the Jewish people prepare a dead body for burial, but no one in the room seems to get that. The reactions are mostly indignant, with Judas being the most vocal about the cost and the waste of it. Many scholars agree that the jar of oil would be worth about \$10,000 today!

As the men scold her, Jesus stops them, saying yet again that he is being prepared for his death. He calls what she has done a "beautiful thing" that will be remembered wherever the gospel was preached. He also says, "She did what she could." The beauty of the act was the extravagance of it. She did what she could with what she had, and in fact, we are still talking about her to this day.

This is extravagant love. She gave him all her affection, the best gift she had. It wasn't about the expense of it; it was about her heart. Of all the people who surrounded Jesus, it seems that this young woman had it right from the start. She chose to sit at his feet instead of busily serving. She gave him the best gift she had, something she had probably been saving for years for her marriage. She did these things because she knew and believed with all her heart that Jesus is the Messiah, and he was the most important thing in her life. Everything else in her life flowed through her love for him. The question is, do we love like that? If the way we respond to every person, every situation, and every circumstance is flowing out of our love for Christ, our lives will be "beautiful things."

When we turn all our attention to him, love is the natural result. While there is no match for the incredible love that Jesus showed for us, when we focus on him, we can show the extravagant love of Jesus to all the people in our lives.

What does giving Jesus all your affection look like in your life?

Who in your life could you love better if you loved Jesus first?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for your amazing, extravagant love, and for the gifts more precious than anything else we could imagine: salvation, redemption, and a right relationship with you. Help me to keep my attention directly on you, so that your love flows naturally from me into everything I do.

# Do We All Sin?

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

Perhaps the most disappointing yet inevitable element of the human condition is our propensity to sin. All of us, no matter how devout in our intentions and belief, have sinned. Whom among us has not, for example, lied, acted selfishly, harbored impure thoughts, or exhibited prideful behavior?

Regardless of our desire to be good and do good, we know that sin lurks in our lives. To sin is, quite simply, to be human. So, if you are human, you will fall.

The original sin, as we all know, occurred when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Novelist and Christian apologist C.S. Lewis wrote in his book *Miracles*, "The sin, both of men and of angels, was rendered possible by the fact that God gave them free will."

Our susceptibility to sin does not, of course, make these acts acceptable. We don't plan to sin, nor do we embrace it. But our reaction to sin determines our destiny. We know that Jesus paid the price for our sins at the cross. But to receive the wonderful, undeserved gift of forgiveness, we must repent.

As Lewis once said, "It is not enough to want to get rid of one's sins, we also need to believe in the One who saves us from our sins." When we sin, our reaction should not be to run away, but rather to run to Jesus. We must go to him, confess our sins to him, and embrace the grace that is offered to us.

In Mark 14, the story of Peter's denial of Jesus illustrates the extent of this forgiveness.

Mark 14:66-72

<sup>66</sup>Meanwhile, Peter was in the courtyard below. One of the servant girls who worked for the high priest came by <sup>67</sup>and noticed Peter warming himself at the fire. She looked at him closely and said, "You were one of those with Jesus of Nazareth."

<sup>68</sup>But Peter denied it. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said, and he went out into the entryway. Just then, a rooster crowed.

<sup>69</sup>When the servant girl saw him standing there, she began telling the others, "This man is definitely one of them!" <sup>70</sup>But Peter denied it again.

A little later some of the other bystanders confronted Peter and said, "You must be one of them, because you are a Galilean."

<sup>71</sup>Peter swore, “A curse on me if I’m lying—I don’t know this man you’re talking about!” <sup>72</sup>And immediately the rooster crowed the second time.

Suddenly, Jesus’ words flashed through Peter’s mind: “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.” And he broke down and wept.

There is much conjecture about whether there are degrees of sin. All sin, whether we deem it great or small, separates us from God and his plan for us. But if we can say that some sins are more substantial than others, Peter’s sin was undoubtedly great; he denied and deserted Christ even after assuring him that he would never do such a thing.

[In his commentary on Mark 14](#), Matthew Henry writes that Jesus had often told his disciples “that they must *suffer* for him, must *take up their cross*, and follow him; and yet Peter is so terribly afraid of suffering, upon the very first alarm of it, that he will lie and swear, and do anything, to avoid it. When Christ was admired and flocked after, he could readily own him; but now that he is deserted, and despised, and run down, he is ashamed of him, and will own no relation to him.”

Jesus, of course, had predicted Peter’s denial. In Mark 14: 27-31, we read of how Jesus told his disciples that they would desert him. In response, Peter said to him, “Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will.” Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, Peter – this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.” Peter responded by declaring emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!”

Despite Peter’s enormous sin of denial, Jesus still loved and forgave him (John 21). Fortunately, we too are offered the gift of forgiveness. And despite our human falls and failures, we can take comfort in knowing that if we repent and love the Lord, he will respond with love and forgiveness every time.

**Prayer:** “Heavenly Father, we thank you for the remarkable and undeserved gift of forgiveness that you offer to us. We know that despite our best efforts, we will fall short of your perfect example. When we sin, grant us the wisdom and courage to come to you and repent, and to embrace your grace by being forever grateful for your gifts of forgiveness and eternal life with you. Amen.



# Vandalism and Jesus

Thursday, April 13, 2017

When I was in the 6th grade, I used to walk through a field on the way to school. There was a well-worn path that ran diagonally across it, and there was dense foliage all around. My friends and I had built a fort in the middle of it. It was the best part of my elementary years.

One day I was walking back through the field and noticed that there were some tractors and heavy equipment clearing a portion of the land to make way for a new residential area. I was furious, so I did what anyone in my situation would do: I vandalized the tractors and equipment. I sliced the tires of the bulldozers and removed battery cables. I figured it would hold them off for a while.

It did; for about three days, there was no activity. Then everything was back on schedule, and things took a turn for the worse. I put sugar in the gas tanks, shoved potatoes in the exhaust, and hid the oil dipsticks.

The police showed up at my house shortly after. They knew everything, and treated me accordingly.

I was rebellious, and in my eyes, they were destroying the very place that was so near and dear to me.

In much the same way, Barabbas (Mark 15:6-15), was a rebel and led an uprising against the Roman government. He became known as a murderer and was serving a sentence according to his conduct. In a time when the Romans were taxing the Jews to support their government, the Jews may have potentially viewed Barabbas as a hero of sorts.

## Mark 15:6-15

<sup>6</sup>Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner—anyone the people requested. <sup>7</sup>One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, a revolutionary who had committed murder in an uprising. <sup>8</sup>The crowd went to Pilate and asked him to release a prisoner as usual.

<sup>9</sup>"Would you like me to release to you this 'King of the Jews'?" Pilate asked. <sup>10</sup>(For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.) <sup>11</sup>But at this point the leading priests stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. <sup>12</sup>Pilate asked them, "Then what should I do with this man you call the king of the Jews?"

<sup>13</sup>They shouted back, "Crucify him!"

<sup>14</sup>"Why?" Pilate demanded. "What crime has he committed?"

But the mob roared even louder, "Crucify him!"

<sup>15</sup>So to pacify the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

Our initial reaction is to say, "Why Barabbas, why would they free him!?" What we have to understand is that God was in control of the whole scenario.

Jesus took Barabbas' place, and he took ours. There is nothing in scripture that says Barabbas was thankful or happy for being freed. He did not know the implications of what was happening; he was being used for God's glory despite his intentions.

Jesus could have saved himself, and he even prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:42) that this cup would be taken from him. If there was ever a time for it to be taken, this was it.

Jesus traded his life for ours because he loves us. Even when he knew we wouldn't choose him, he did it anyway.

He endured being beaten, scorned, humiliated, whipped, nailed, pierced, and asphyxiated, all so that he could be with us. He didn't even say a word, other than ***Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)***

I am reminded of the lyrics in a song by *Kutless* titled "Passion."

***He chose to give it all  
Jesus endured the pain  
Paying a debt I owed and created a paradox in me***

***Nail pierced hands they run with blood  
A splitting brow forced by the thorns  
His face is writhing with the pain, yet it's comforting to me***

I am a Barabbas, and so are you. We deserved death. Jesus, instead, served that sentence for us by giving his life, so that we could know him.

What is your initial reaction after reading Mark 15:6-15?

Do you see yourself as Barabbas? Explain.

Is Jesus death and resurrection comforting to you? Why or Why not?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for taking my place. I am so grateful that you love me and want to know everything about me. Amen.

# Good Friday

Friday, April 14th, 2017

Good Friday. The term is used to describe the day the only perfect, sinless man died a very public, embarrassing, and wrongful death. A day filled with physical and spiritual darkness. A day Jesus felt betrayed by God as the world's sin was cast onto him. But a day that was necessary to restore God's relationship with his people.

Mark 15 recounts the details of Jesus' last day on earth, from his trial before Pilate to his excruciating death. Crucifixion was a common form of punishment used by the Romans at the time to send a message about what happened to criminals. The fact that Jesus was sentenced to the same type of death seems cruel and unusual, but when he claimed to be the Son of God, the Romans believed he committed blasphemy, punishable by death.

But without death, there can be no resurrection. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15, without Jesus' resurrection, our faith is "futile," the work of the disciples and our pastors today is "useless," and "you are still in your sins," (vv. 12-19).

As Christians, we stake our hope in the fact that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. Paul considered this message "of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve," (1 Cor. 15:3-5). The appearance of Jesus to his followers just three days after his death was paramount because it provided eyewitness accounts of his resurrection. Had no one seen him, the only explanation would be the one given by the chief priests, who told everyone the disciples stole Jesus' body from a tomb sealed with a boulder and protected by guards (Matthew 28:11-15).

Instead, we can read the real account in Mark 16:1-8:

<sup>1</sup>Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup>Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" <sup>4</sup>But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. <sup>5</sup>When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, <sup>6</sup>but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth,

who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. <sup>7</sup>Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died." <sup>8</sup>The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened.

The message the women received from the angel is the same message Jesus gave to his disciples before ascending back to heaven. Go, and tell the world what you have seen. Don't be afraid because I will be with you. Be witnesses of the greatest love story in history.

Who in your life needs to hear about the resurrection?

**Prayer:** God, today I remember your ultimate sacrifice. The sacrifice was necessary because of my disobedience. Thank you. Thank you. A million times thank you for loving me so much that you were willing to let your son take my sin, my shame, my punishment. I pray that today will be Good, despite the darkness. Here I am, Lord. Send me into the world to spread the message that He is Risen! Amen.

*This post was written by Ryan Cook, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*