

“Poured Out His Love”

Luke 22:7-23

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We had our Ash Wednesday service this week. As we received ashes on our foreheads, we were invited to reflect on our human mortality and need of repentance before God. My baby Jacob is now two years old, which is called “the Terrible Twos.” His favorite words are, “it’s mine, mine”. It seems that he is confident of what he does. But the reality is that he plays with water and dumps it on the dining table, pulls Kleenex tissues everywhere, and one day, he plucked off his mom’s laptop keyboard pieces. We discipline him by having him say “sorry” and then we give him a big hug which is a sign of “forgiveness” and “reconciliation.” In the same way, ashes are typically used as a sign of sadness. It is a time to think about how we could do a better job of being God’s children. It is a day to say “sorry” to God. A spiritual season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and it runs for forty days prior to Easter. Sundays are not included in the count.

The Bible doesn’t directly talk about Lent, but early Christian fathers and Christians observed this time period for reflection and repentance on their relationship with God and Jesus Christ; especially his suffering, his sacrifice, death and resurrection. Our church also prepares for Easter by observing repentance and spiritual discipline. We have small Lenten study groups during the week and Lenten Soup Suppers every Thursday during this period of time. I hope you come and join us. I thank Kathy Glass, our Soup Suppers’ Coordinator, volunteers and small group leaders and participants. I hope we experience the meaningful and spiritual reflection on Jesus Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection.

The dates of Ash Wednesday and Lent are movable every year because the Easter date is determined by the date of the Jewish Passover. The Jewish holiday calendar is based on solar and lunar cycles. This year, the Easter date is March 31. The early Church leaders wanted to keep Easter service in correlation to the Jewish Passover. They wanted Easter to always be celebrated subsequent to the Passover. Later, the first Council of Nicea (325A.D.) established the date of Easter as the first Sunday after the full moon following the spring equinox. So the Passover has significant meanings in our understanding of Easter.

This morning, I would like to reflect on the season of Lent and the Last Supper. The Last Supper happened on the Passover. Obviously, when Jesus had

the last meal with his disciples, he meant to observe the Passover, but it had more spiritual insights and inspiring challenges to his followers. Jesus' special message reflected on the meaning of the Passover. Next week, we will continue to journey with Jesus praying together at the garden of Gethsemane and each week, we will follow Jesus Christ to the cross. Through suffering and sacrifice and after six full weeks, we will all witness his resurrection on Easter morning.

In order to understand the last supper, it is important to know the meaning of the Passover in Jewish tradition. For 400 years, the Israelites had been Egyptian slaves. When God called Moses to deliver them, the King of Egypt wouldn't let people go. God brought a series of plagues upon the Egyptians. The last terrible one was that God would strike down the firstborn child in every family throughout the land. On that night, the Israelites were to sacrifice a lamb. They were to mark their doorposts with its blood. As the Angel of Death was to pass through the land, it would pass over the homes marked by the blood of a lamb, thus people were able to spare the firstborn in that home. By the help of God, the Israelites were able to escape from the disaster and moved to the Promised Land. The Passover gathering is a meal for commemorating God's central saving act toward Israel. So the Passover is meant to be a festival and celebration time. People remember that they were slaves but now they are set free. The time is filled with joy and thanksgiving to God.

Ironically, on this joyful and festive day, Jesus was ready to pronounce something serious and significant to his disciples. I think that the disciples were confused and wondered what was going to happen. Jesus took bread, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, he took the cup, saying, "This is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured for you." Why did Jesus refer bread and wine as his body and the new covenant for his people?

During the Last Supper, Jesus also said to his disciples, "One of you is going to betray me." What is happening here? I am sure that this provocative statement made the disciples feel embarrassed and bewildered. Who is the person that Jesus pointed out? Do you think Jesus talked about Judas who betrayed his master? Or his disciple, Peter, who was disappointed, turned away and left when his master was hung on the cross? No. He pointed out all of us, including our church. His followers remind us of our human nature; reflections on ourselves as betrayed, selfish, self-centered. Let's think **ABOUT US!** We know that what really matters is how we live and love. But ironically, because of our human nature, it does really matter to us how much we have. But we also have a holy desire to understand others and be humble. At the same time, we realize that we are filled with self-pride and take others for granted. We find

ourselves stuck in our human nature. Who will save us? In order to save us, if we use a metaphor of the Old Testament exodus story, we need a sacrificial act to mark our doorpost. Jesus decided to be the blood of lamb for our Passover.

In this way, Jesus showed and taught us God's great love. God is all about love. There is no other way to understand, to experience God. The love of God is the only way to set us free from our sin, bondage and our human predicament. Love is not punishment but forgiveness, not indifference but compassion. The power of love leads us to the heart of acceptance, understanding, and reconciliation. Jesus established the new covenant of God's love through the Last Supper. The Last Supper was meant to be repeated in commemoration of the new covenant of God's love, just as the Passover was meant to commemorate the central sign of God's saving act in the Old Testament. In our Christian faith, we are able to reshape our relationship with God through the Last Supper. God's love has been given for all of us as the new covenant of God. This is a new Passover for all of us. God is love. God poured out his love to every person's soul. Our cups overflow with the blessings of God's abundant grace and mercy. As we continue to journey together during Lent, I hope that we learn more about God's love through Jesus' suffering, passion, death and resurrection. Amen.