



# *Lakeside Sermons*

Lakeside Baptist Church • Rocky Mount, North Carolina  
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MAUNDY THURSDAY  
*BE THOU OUR VISION*

## Open Our Eyes to the Bread and the Wine Exodus 12:1-14; Matthew 26:17-29

Like those first disciples who followed Jesus throughout Galilee and into Judea, we have come to this night by way of a long and circuitous journey. It began at the Jordan River, long a symbol of crossing over from one life to another. Long before Jesus was born, the Hebrew people crossed from the wilderness of Gad into the Promised Land. The Jews who were baptized by John in the Jordan River were crossing over from sinfulness to righteousness and from despair to hope in the coming Messiah. For Jesus, rising from his baptism and moving through the waters of the Jordan meant crossing from an ordinary life as a Galilean Jew to accepting his calling as Son of God and Son of Man, the Savior of the world.

From the seashore at Capernaum where he began assembling his disciples, we followed Jesus into the hill country to a wedding at Cana where his first miracle was manifest. There, in the changing of water to wine, Jesus gave hint to his power to draw out the extraordinary from the ordinary, to manifest the uniqueness of common things, and to reveal the potency of things which appear to have no power at all.

We tracked through village after village, watching Jesus heal, hearing him teach, witnessing his down-to-earth compassion. We entered the holy city of Jerusalem and marveled at the courage he displayed when challenged by the Pharisees and other religious leaders. With his closest disciples, we have finally arrived at this night, at this table, with this bread, and this cup.

When God delivered his people from the oppressive hand of Pharaoh, it was established that every year the Hebrews would remember that event and God's mercy with a Passover celebration. The Seder, as it is known now, is a proscribed meal which tracks the enslavement of the Jews and God's rescue to freedom. It is celebrated today as it was over two thousand years ago. Jews know the movements and meaning of the meal by heart. Each element reminds them of their ancestor's hardship and of God's delivering grace.

So it was that Jesus and his closest disciples gathered in an upper room to celebrate Passover. The meal progressed as it should have with prayers and memories offered to represent the significant events of the Exodus. It was all very familiar to each of the persons gathered in that room. Then Jesus took a loaf of bread in his hands and tore it in two while saying, "This is my body broken for you." But these words were not in the Passover script! They waited to see what Jesus would do next. They did not wait long for soon Jesus held up a goblet of wine and said, "This wine is the new covenant of my blood which is shed for the forgiveness of many sins." Neither was this interpretation a part of their ancestors' tradition. Jesus was suggesting something new, something powerful with their very familiar tradition.

Bread was a staple of life, something Jews ate every day—sometimes the only thing some of them had to nourish their bodies. By breaking the bread, Jesus reminded his friends that his ministry was physical and sustaining. He walked and slept, ate and drank, just as they did. But he could also touch and heal. He could meet their physical hunger and their spiritual need. Everything he did was framed in the physical being he was. His ministry was literally "hands on," for that is what an incarnate God does.

Jesus loved the life he shared with the people at the table with him. He also knew he would share their death as well, though his would be painfully violent. The bread he held in his hands was his identification with them—with us. "In this is your hope," he said, "because just as you need bread for your bodies, you need me for your souls. Whenever you eat bread—which is daily—remember me!"

Then he picked up a cup. The dark red wine had long been a symbol of blood and ancient people believed that blood held the spark of life. That is why animal sacrifices were offered for the forgiveness of sins. Yet God had declared through his prophets that he wanted no sacrifice except the sacrifice of a contrite heart. When he passed the goblet to his friends, Jesus admitted that he was the willing sacrifice to satisfy the world's bloodlust. But, he added, my blood will be poured out, not simply as an atonement for sin, but as an infusion of grace. In my blood flows life, life that is eternal, full and complete.

From that point on, the disciples saw bread and wine differently. That is why we gather around this table and share this meal. Jesus' life and death and resurrection changed everything—even a common meal of bread and

wine. He offered himself for our sake. He gave his life so that we might have life. He sacrificed his body and blood so that we might be vibrant and whole.

It is not a meal to be taken lightly. We dine at this table because we are invited, because we desire to share in the life of Christ, because we, too, want to be transformed. We eat this bread and drink this cup realizing that Jesus sacrificed himself for us. We eat the bread and drink the cup praying that we, too, will be empowered to become more like Christ.

God in Christ did something extraordinary all those years ago in that upper room. God in Christ continues to do extraordinary things through us if we will but believe and live into his grace. May God open our eyes to see in Christ the true bread of heaven and the wine of salvation. Amen.