

**Exodus 12:1-7 & 14** <sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, <sup>2</sup>"This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. <sup>3</sup>Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. <sup>4</sup>If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. <sup>5</sup>The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. <sup>6</sup>Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. <sup>7</sup>Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

<sup>14</sup>"This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance.

**Mark 14:22-25** <sup>22</sup>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." <sup>23</sup>Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup>"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. <sup>25</sup>"Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

**Mark 14:32-50** <sup>32</sup>They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." <sup>33</sup>He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup>"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." <sup>35</sup>Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup>"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." <sup>37</sup>Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? <sup>38</sup>Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." <sup>39</sup>Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. <sup>40</sup>When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. <sup>41</sup>Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup>Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" <sup>43</sup>Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. <sup>44</sup>Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." <sup>45</sup>Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. <sup>46</sup>The men seized Jesus and arrested him. <sup>47</sup>Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. <sup>48</sup>"Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? <sup>49</sup>Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." <sup>50</sup>Then everyone deserted him and fled.

Exodus 12:1-7 & 14 and Mark 14:22-25 & 32-50

“AN UPPER ROOM DID OUR LORD PREPARE FOR THOSE HE LOVED UNTIL THE END. AND HIS DISCIPLES STILL GATHER THERE TO CELEBRATE THEIR RISEN FRIEND.

A LASTING GIFT JESUS GAVE HIS OWN, TO SHARE HIS BREAD, HIS LOVING CUP. WHATEVER BURDENS MAY BOW US DOWN, HE BY HIS CROSS SHALL LIFT US UP.”

THUS THE WORDS OF A HYMN REMIND US ABOUT THIS NIGHT THAT IS TRAGIC YET HOPEFUL.

IT IS A NIGHT TO REFLECT ON THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR JESUS, THAT SETS THE STAGE FOR A NEW BEGINNING FOR NOT ONLY CHRIST BUT THE WORLD AS WELL.

WE HAVE GATHERED HERE THIS EVENING TO REMEMBER THE LAST NIGHT OF JESUS' MORTAL LIFE.

ON THIS NIGHT WE LOOK BACK ON GOD'S DELIVERANCE OF HIS PEOPLE AND ALL PEOPLE.

IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS, THE FIRST PASSOVER MEAL WAS EATEN ON THE NIGHT THE ANGEL OF DEATH PASSED OVER THE DWELLINGS MARKED WITH LAMB'S BLOOD.

THUS THE MEAL BECAME A WAY GOD ESTABLISHED FOR HIS PEOPLE TO REMEMBER WHAT HE HAD DONE FOR THEM.

IN THE JEWISH TRADITION ONE OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF THE PASSOVER, AT THE MEAL CALLED THE SEDER IS: “WHY IS THIS NIGHT DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER NIGHTS?”

THIS IS A QUESTION CHRISTIANS CAN ASK WHEN WE THINK ABOUT TONIGHT.

INDEED WHAT IS IT THAT IS SO UNIQUE ABOUT THIS NIGHT THAT IT IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER FOR CHRISTIANS?

IT WAS ON THE NIGHT BEFORE HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS JESUS TRANSFORMED HIS LAST SUPPER, A PASSOVER MEAL

FOR ONE PEOPLE, INTO A SACRAMENT FOR ALL PEOPLE WHO COME TO FAITH BY HIM.

THUS THE LAST SUPPER BECAME THE LORD'S SUPPER, THE MEAL OF BOTH REMEMBRANCE AND SPIRITUAL RENEWAL.

AND SINCE THAT NIGHT THE LORD'S SUPPER HAS BECOME A SACRAMENTAL MEAL INSTITUTED BY JESUS, TO REMIND US OF HIS SACRIFICE AND EMPOWER US TO RESPOND.

IT IS A GIFT FROM GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD WHO COME TO THE TABLE BY FAITH.

IT IS A MEAL THAT POINTS US FORWARD TO THE TIME JESUS WILL SHARE THE SACRED MEAL WITH ALL HIS FOLLOWERS, AND A MEAL THAT REMINDS US ABOUT HIS SACRIFICE.

BUT ON THIS NIGHT, IN PARTICULAR WE ARE INVITED TO REMEMBER ALSO NOT JUST CHRIST'S SACRIFICE, BUT ALSO WHAT LEAD UP TO IT.

LET US THEREFORE ON CONSIDER THE EVENTS OF THIS NIGHT, WHICH MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE WORLD AS IT HAD BEEN BEFORE CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

AFTER THE MEAL, JESUS AND ELEVEN OF HIS DISCIPLES WENT TO THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE, BUT JUDAS SLIPPED AWAY.

THERE, JESUS PRAYED AND ALSO ASKED HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY WITH AND FOR HIM, BUT THEY ABANDONED HIM BY FALLING ASLEEP.

ON THIS NIGHT JESUS PRAYED FOR THE CUP OF SUFFERING TO PASS BY HIM, BUT HIS FATHER SAID "NO".

AND SO, JESUS WITH DIGNITY AND COURAGE, FAITHFULNESS AND SORROW- DRANK FROM THE CUP.

SO THIS NIGHT IS DIFFERENT FOR US BECAUSE IT IS THE NIGHT CHRIST'S SUFFERING BEGINS.

IT IS THE NIGHT OF CHRIST'S BETRAYAL BY JUDAS AND ARREST.

THIS IS THE NIGHT HE WAS ABANDONED BY HIS OTHER DISCIPLES AND DENIED BY PETER.

THIS IS THE NIGHT HUMANITY TURNED AGAINST JESUS ALLOWING THE RULER OF THIS WORLD TO ORCHESTRATE CHRIST'S CONDEMNATION AND DEATH.

IT WAS ALSO ON THIS NIGHT THAT JESUS GAVE THE NEW COMMANDMENT TO LOVE GOD AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

THEN JESUS SHOWED WHAT LOVE IS BY ALLOWING HIMSELF TO BE BETRAYED AND ARRESTED, ABANDONED AND DENIED BY HIS CLOSEST FOLLOWERS.

THIS WAS THE NIGHT THE GOD OF ALL CREATION, INCARNATE IN JESUS, WAS PUT ON TRIAL BY THOSE HE CREATED.

THE RELIGIOUS ELITE, CONDEMNED HIM TO DEATH AND SENT TO PILATE FOR EXECUTION.

THE IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT ON THIS NIGHT, LIKE ON THE DAY TO FOLLOW-JESUS HAD CHOICES.

HE COULD HAVE SAID "NO" TO ALL OF IT. HE COULD HAVE CALLED FOR DELIVERANCE FROM HEAVEN, BUT OUT OF LOVE HE DID NOT.

JESUS' CHOICE LEADS US TO LOOK BACK ON EVERYTHING OTHERS DID TO HIM.

WE ALSO CAN CONSIDER THE FACT THAT THEY TOO COULD HAVE MADE OTHER CHOICES, BUT DID NOT.

THE DIFFERENCE IS JESUS MADE HIS CHOICES OUT OF LOVE FOR HIS FATHER AND LOVE FOR US.

BUT THE OTHERS AMONG HIS DISCIPLES AND HIS ENEMIES MADE CHOICES FOR OTHER REASONS.

SOME MIGHT HAVE TURNED AGAINST JESUS OUT OF FEAR,  
OTHERS OUT OF MISGUIDED LOVE FOR GOD OR COUNTRY,  
AND SURELY SOME DID SO OUT OF LOVE FOR SELF ALONE.

THIS IS WHERE WE ARE CHALLENGED TO CONSIDER OUR  
CHOICES.

NOT WHAT WE THINK WE WOULD HAVE DONE IF WE WERE  
ONE OF THE TWELVE, OR A TEMPLE SOLDIER, OR A MEMBER  
OF THE JEWISH COUNCIL, OR EVEN PILATE.

INSTEAD WE ARE INVITED, ON THIS NIGHT, TO THINK ABOUT  
HOW WE HAVE AT TIMES CHOSEN TO BETRAY, ABANDON,  
DENY, AND CRUCIFY JESUS.

IN OTHER WORDS, HOW HAVE WE SINNED AGAINST HIM? HOW  
HAVE WE NOT LOVED GOD, OTHERS, AND PERHAPS EVEN OUR  
SELF LIKE JESUS COMMANDED?

LET US TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON THIS.....

NOW LET US LOOK AGAIN AT THE SIGN OF HOPE WE ARE  
GIVEN IN THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION.

WE REMEMBER JESUS OFFERED THE BREAD AND CUP TO  
THOSE WHOM HE KNEW WOULD BETRAY AND DENY AND  
ABANDON HIM.

IN OTHER WORDS HE OFFERED IT TO SINNERS AT THE LAST  
SUPPER, AND NOW AT THE LORD'S SUPPER-JESUS OFFERS THE  
SAME TO US, BECAUSE HE LOVES US.

HE INVITES US BECAUSE HE KNOWS WE NEED HIM AND ASKS  
US TO ADMIT OUR NEED AND THEN COME TO HIM.

THUS THIS MEAL IS PROVIDED TO SINNERS BY THE SINLESS  
ONE TO HELP US REMEMBER AND EMBRACE THE  
FORGIVENESS HE OFFERS.

THIS SACRAMENT IS ALSO AN INVITATION TO PUT OUR TRUST  
IN THE LORD AND BE TRANSFORMED BY HIS SPIRIT.

FOR IT IS THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE  
BREAD AND THE WINE OR JUICE BECOME CHRIST'S BODY AND  
BLOOD.

AND THOUGH THE SPIRIT DURING THIS MEAL WE ARE  
SPIRITUALLY JOINED WITH CHRIST AND ONE ANOTHER.

AND SO ON THIS NIGHT, AND EVERY TIME WE ANSWER THE  
SAVIOR'S INVITATION TO COME TO HIS TABLE, WE  
REMEMBER JESUS' SACRIFICE FOR OUR SAKES, AND  
REMEMBER THE FORGIVENESS HE BRINGS.

ONE COMMUNION HYMN OFFERS THIS FINAL WORD OF  
REFLECTION ON JESUS, HIS SACRIFICE, AND THE POWER AND  
PROMISE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER GIVEN TO US ON THIS NIGHT.

"BREAD OF HEAVEN ON THEE WE FEED, FOR THOU ART OUR  
FOOD INDEED;

EVER MAY OUR SOULS BE FED, WITH THIS TRUE AND LIVING  
BREAD.

DAY BY DAY WITH STRENGTH SUPPLIED THROUGH THE LIFE  
OF CHRIST WHO DIED.

VINE OF HEAVEN THY LOVE SUPPLIES THIS BLEST CUP OF  
SACRIFICE;

'TIS THY WOUNDS OUR HEALING GIVE; TO THY CROSS WE  
LOOK AND LIVE;

THOU OUR LIFE! O LET US BE ROOTED, GRAFTED, BUILT ON  
THEE."

COME LET US ACCEPT THE SACRED GIFT OF LOVE JESUS  
INSTITUTED ON THIS NIGHT THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM EVERY  
OTHER NIGHT. AMEN