



The God Who Saves

Exodus and New Exodus

Week 8

Exodus, Passover, and the Lord's Supper

Donald Gowan's book, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary*, has been very helpful in the development of this class.



Moses and the Passover (Exodus 12)

- ❖ Advent begins the Christian liturgical calendar. Passover begins the Jewish liturgical calendar.
- ❖ The bitter herbs recall the bitterness of slavery. The unleavened bread signifies the need to be ready.
- ❖ Those gathered around the table are dressed to run and poised to dash out the door.
- ❖ 12:24-27 fashions this ritual into a catechism for children.
- ❖ The care taken with the details of this meal remind us that there is nothing *casual* about this. The meal is to be explained to the children, but it is serious business. Look at the consequences of using leaven in 12:15.
- ❖ This is a Jewish meal, but it is our meal too. Our practice of Holy Communion not only links us with Jesus and his disciples, but also the Hebrew slaves in Egypt.



Jesus and the Last Supper (Mark 14:22-25 & parallels)

- ❖ This is a Passover meal. Jesus takes all the imagery of the Passover ritual and fashions it around himself.
- ❖ There is urgency and bitterness.
- ❖ There is bread – broken.
- ❖ There is blood (the cup of wine) – the blood of a new covenant.
 - The blood is shed for the forgiveness of sins – for a New Exodus.
- ❖ The entire meal is focused upon Jesus’ death. He is to be the sacrificed lamb of Exodus 12.

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Luke and the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

- ❖ Two disciples are walking to a village 7 miles from Jerusalem after the horrific events of Friday. They talked about it, surely disappointed at how things had turned out.
- ❖ Then they are joined by another who, after hearing them explain the events, proceeds to interpret the Scriptures for them.
- ❖ When the trio sits down at a table, the stranger “took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.” Then their eyes were opened.
- ❖ This is a story of Word and Table. Luke intends for us to “hear” the Jesus-meal here.
 - Our hearts will be warmed by the reading and interpretation of Scripture. We will “know” Christ through the breaking of the bread.

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Paul and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians)

- ❖ This was written within 25 years after Jesus' death and resurrection and before any of the Gospels.
- ❖ In 5:6-7, Paul describes Jesus as the paschal lamb who has been sacrificed. The believers are to be "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."
- ❖ In 11:17-34, Paul works through abuses of the Lord's supper among the Corinthian Christians. They are making a mess of it. They are treating it like any other meal – some go hungry, others are gluttons, and still others get drunk!
 - Note that Paul's paragraph on the practice of Communion could have been lifted from a Gospel. Already, celebration of the Lord's Supper is an established practice among the Christian communities. It also gave rise to occasional rumors that the Jesus-followers were cannibals!

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Questions

- ❖ Why do we practice Communion?
- ❖ What does it all mean?
- ❖ What are the cup and the bread really about?
- ❖ How often will we take Communion?
- ❖ Who can take Communion?
- ❖ Who can preside over Communion?

Sadly, the Lord's Supper has been a focal point for disunity among Christians rather than a meal that binds us together, with Christ and with one another.

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Party TIME

- ❖ A party!
 - Freedom party
 - A sharing (*koinonia*/communion) set apart for God: Holy Communion
 - A thank-you meal – *eucharisto* is Greek for thanks . . . Eucharist
 - A sending forth: “Mass” is from the Latin, ‘*ite – missa est*’ “Go, you who are sent forth”
 - The Lord’s Supper – connects us with the evening meal Jesus shared with his disciples
- ❖ What time is it?
 - Clock time
 - Human time
 - God’s time

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Anglicans, Methodists, and the “*via media*”

- ❖ Every time we celebrate Holy Communion, *God’s past catches us to up yet again and God’s future comes to meet us once more*. Jesus Christ is present with us. But how? What does this really mean?
- ❖ Methodists are descendents of the Anglicans. The Church of England was built upon the middle way, the *via media*, between the “Puritans” on the one hand and Rome on the other.
 - Holy Communion is neither a conjuring trick that uses a few magic words to transform the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus, but neither is Holy Communion a mere “remembering/recalling” of what happened.
- ❖ There is reality here. Each time we take Communion we are with Jesus and the disciples in the upper room.
 - “This is the night when our God, the Holy one, blessed be he, came down to Egypt and rescued us from the Egyptians.” The past catches up to us and the future comes to meet us in one NOW, God’s now, that “creates” anew a saved people and binds us with all of God’s people over the millennia.

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God's Drama

- ❖ Holy Communion is to be practiced often.
 - Most UMC churches take Communion once a month. Many in the UMC are urging weekly.
- ❖ Like baptism, Communion is a sacrament – a sign/act. It is both a signpost to God's grace and a means by which God's grace is delivered.
- ❖ Great care is to be taken with Communion.
 - The handling of the elements.
 - The ordained are to preside.
 - The liturgy to be used.
 - Attention is to be taken with all the "details." It all matters!
- ❖ The UMC practices an open table – all who have been baptized, regardless of age or denomination.

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