

The Final 24 Hours That Changed the World
A Special Meal
John 13:21-26, 38

The final 24 hours of the life Jesus will be our focus for the next 7 weeks. We will use the final 24 hours of his life to examine different aspects of our relationship to God. We begin at a special place in scripture known as the Upper Room. Traditionally the Upper Room is believed to be the place where Jesus ate the Passover Meal, and final meal with his disciples before he was arrested and crucified. It is also believed that after Jesus was resurrected from the dead and ascended into Heaven, the Upper Room was the place where the remaining disciples gathered with Mary, the mother of Jesus and some other followers. When they were all together praying in the Upper Room, the power of God's spirit, what we also call the Holy Spirit, came into their presence and revealed God's power in them and launched them into a new way of life.

But for now we are in the Upper Room and there a very special meal will take place. Jesus will eat the Passover Meal with his disciples. He will take that special meal and give it new meaning. To help us appreciate that moment, we're going to watch a 3 minute video piece by one of America's most well respected United Methodist pastor's, Pastor Adam Hamilton. Please watch.

Video

The Passover Meal for the Jew or Hebrew was a way to tell about God delivering them from human slavery into freedom. Jesus took that significant meal and used it to tell about his sacrifice to bring us in spiritual freedom. He told his disciples that every time they share in the bread and cup it reminds them of his sacrifice. The laying down of his life communicated that nothing in this world can stop the power of God's love, not the darkness of sin, suffering

or even death.

I said last week that the season of Lent has been traditionally a time of reflection and evaluation for Christians. When Jesus offers the bread and wine to become symbols of his body and blood, it was a moment of reflection and evaluation.

Consider who Jesus was talking to when he shared this meal. He was talking to his inner circle of followers, his closest friends, and the very ones he was making into his disciples. **In John 13:15 he said to them, “I have set you an example, that you should also do as I have done to you.”** He said those words after he washed their feet as an example that he came to be a servant, and disciples of Jesus are to be servants. Yet, sitting around this table with Jesus were men with various temperaments and convictions that fell short of his expectations.

- Men like Peter could be quick to anger and harsh words.
- Men like John and James were often concerned about their status more than they needed to be.
- Some of his followers might have been very passive like Bartholomew because the gospels say nothing about them other than their name.
- Still some disciples were very inquisitive, and perhaps too cautious, and timid like Thomas.
- We all know Judas would betray Jesus and all of these men would abandon him.
- The men who followed Jesus and shared this meal had strengths but they definitely had weaknesses.

During the meal Jesus said, **“I tell you one of you will betray me.” v.21** The disciples begin to question who it will be. John 13:26 tells us Jesus said, **“It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.”** Then, he gave a piece of bread to Judas. But after Judas left the meal to carry out his betrayal, Jesus revealed all others would fall away. John’s gospel in chapter 13:37 says that Peter insisted he would lay down his life for Jesus, but in verse 38, Jesus said to Peter, **“Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.”**

See I believe Jesus shared this meal to communicate to his friends the depth of love, God was revealing to them. He was willing to continue to love them in spite of their flaws, including that they would all abandon him. Jesus transformed the Passover meal to be a meal of grace. His meal was a message that he went to the cross to demonstrate nothing would keep him from loving. His love would ultimately win out. It is why he said **“I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:18)** meaning when the victory over evil and death is complete and final.

We are followers like those first disciples. We still have our flaws, failures, and give into our fears and weaknesses. Like those first disciples of Jesus, we do not always see or work to see our weaknesses. **More the reason why we should be a part of March 11th . Take advantage of a day of preaching, friendship and process to help us assess our strengths but also our weaknesses so we can live stronger lives as Christians.**

Our relationship with God is no better than those first disciples who failed and flubbed up royally. His sacrifice on the cross helps us to see who we are to him. We are people in need of his love and truth to continually help us to become more like him.

- This meal means we can stop running from God because of our sense of shame.

- His meal offers the power of assurance of forgiveness that lifts the weight of our guilt off of us and gives us renewed hope.
- His meal draws us back to him for his truth to be a light in our doubt and confusion.

Just like we continually need food to sustain ourselves, this meal of Jesus is the moment that feeds us spiritual food that empowers our relationship to God and each other as Christians.

This why in a few minutes we'll invite you to come forward and take the bread and the cup from the trays that are positioned in front of the mirrors. The mirrors have a cross in the center to remind us Jesus went to the cross for us to reveal the depth of God's love. **The reason for having the bread and cup in front of the mirror reminds us because of his love, we don't have to fear or avoid taking a good spiritual look at ourselves. We can honestly look at the darkest, most disappointing thing about us because he went to the cross.** He has already proven he will no more reject you, anymore than he did those first disciples who failed him. But our decision is whether we'll surrender to him. All we can do is decide whether we'll accept his invitation to come to him.

To prepare us for this moment there is music video we ask you to watch, pray and prepare to receive the Lord's Supper.

Video: Come Home Running, by Christ Tomlin