

– Exodus 12:1-7; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:10 – March 12, 2008 – Maundy Thursday –

Pastor Scott Hirssig

LENTEN THEME: Lamb of God Pure & Holy

THEME TODAY: The Lamb of God who Has Mercy on Us

I greet you with grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit who lives within us as believers, and empowering us.

Today our Lamb of God Pure and Holy focus is on MERCY. This is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who brings you grace, who brings you mercy and who brings you peace.

Mercy is different than grace. Mercy in Webster's Dictionary (17<sup>th</sup> edition) is defined as "compassion or forbearance shown to an offender, a subject, or a victim of misfortune.", whereas grace is defined as "unmerited Divine assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification." In other words, mercy deals with the miserable condition and grace deals with what caused the condition. Mercy takes the sinner from misery to glory, and grace - from guilt to acquittal. Both are involved in our salvation and our Christian living. It is Jesus who gives you grace, who gives you mercy, who gives you peace. We are guilty of breaking the law of God and deserve punishment, but He grants grace, mercy and peace.

**MERCY** - Peter proclaimed the mercy of salvation, saying,

**“<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”** - 1 Peter 1:3 (ESV)

Elizabeth, who is without child and advanced in years, (Luke 1:7) is given mercy in the birth of John the Baptist. The first chapter of Luke says,

**“<sup>57</sup> Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. <sup>58</sup> And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.”** -

Luke 1:57-58 (ESV)

Jesus also showed mercy in physical healing, many times healing everyone, as referenced in the following verses: Matt. 4:24, 8:16, 9:35, 14:35-36, 12:15; Mark 1:32, 1:34, 3:10; Luke 6:18-19, 7:21. Jesus showed compassion by granting healing, casting out demons, and teaching, as noted in Matt. 14:14 and Mark 6:34. God is a God of mercy. Jeremiah proclaims,

**“<sup>22</sup> The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”** - Lamentations. 3:22-23 (ESV)

Have joy in the Lord! His mercy is new everyday. How great is His faithfulness!

**GRACE** - Paul spoke of grace in salvation, saying,

“<sup>24</sup> **and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**” -

Romans 3:24 (ESV)

and in Ephesians,

“<sup>7</sup> **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,**” - Ephesians 1:7 (ESV)

Oh, how we need grace everyday through the word and sacraments! Peter writes in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter,

“<sup>2</sup> **May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.**” -

2 Peter 1:2 (ESV)

And he closes with,

“<sup>18</sup> **But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.**” - 2 Peter 3:18 (ESV)

*This is the grace that is to be growing each and every day.*

**MAUNDY THURSDAY – THE LORD’S SUPPER** - Today is Maundy Thursday. By the Lord’s command, we partake in the Lord’s Supper - the real presence, the true body and blood of our Lord - in, with, and under the bread and wine. That night, after Judas, the betrayer, left the group, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, after which, he would not drink the fruit of the vine again until the coming New Kingdom (Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18).

**MAUNDY THURSDAY – TROUBLED DISCIPLES** - The disciples were troubled that day. Jesus foretold of his persecution and death. Yet, in the midst of that trouble, he brings comfort, saying,

“<sup>1</sup> **Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe in me.**” - John 14:1 (ESV)

Are you troubled today? Jesus knows your hurt, and through the word, brings grace, mercy and peace.

In that same chapter, John 14, Jesus declared,

“<sup>6</sup> **I am the way, the truth, and the life...**” - John 14:6

He grants eternal life to all who believe, trust and/or call out to Him (John 6:37; Rom 10:9, 13). He is preparing a place for all who belong to Him (John 14:2). No matter what you are troubled with, Jesus is the answer. He knows all about you. Surrender to Him. Live with Him each day, as He brings you grace, mercy and peace.

Later in John 14, Jesus says,

“<sup>27</sup> **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid**” - John 14:27

You don’t need to be afraid or troubled. Rest in Christ! He bring you grace. He brings you mercy. He brings you peace.

**MAUNDY THURSDAY – A TIME OF PASSOVER** - That first Maundy Thursday happened at the time of preparation for the Jewish Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover began back in Egypt, before the 10<sup>th</sup> plague (the death of the first born), and finished in the fulfillment of Christ as the true Passover Lamb. However, the Jews of Jesus' day continued the sacrifices until the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. They continue, even today, to celebrate the the Passover, looking for the Messiah, who they believe, is yet to come.

Jesus celebrated the Passover on Thursday, yet, while Jesus was on trial, John tells us that Friday, **“...was the day of Preparation of the Passover.”** - John 19:14 (ESV)

Did Jesus celebrate a day too early? Is scripture wrong on the dates? The answer is found in historical writings from Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived during the time of Christ; the *Mishna*; and other ancient Jewish texts. These sources tell us that the Jews in northern Palestine, which included Jesus and His disciples, calculated days from sunset to sunset. This meant that preparation for the Passover began on Thursday or Passover Thursday night.

The Jews in southern Palestine, which included the city of Jerusalem (where most of the Sadducees were located), calculated days from sunrise to sunrise. That meant that Friday was the day of preparation, as the Gospel writer John states. They, then, would celebrate the Feast of Passover meal on Friday evening.

What this means is that Jesus eats the Passover meal on Maundy Thursday, and is the Passover. On Friday, He dies as *the* Passover lamb at the same time they kill the lambs in the temple.

The Passover is described in Exodus. It was provided as protection from the horror of the 10<sup>th</sup> plague - the death of the first-borns. The year is 1445 B.C. The number of Jews, or the nation of Israel (the family of Jacob) has grown from approximately 70 family members at the time of Joseph, to about 2 million (600,000 men [Exo 12:37], probably age 20+, then add women and children) in just 430 years. Pharaoh has resisted God's command to let the children of Israel go, resting in his power and that of the Egyptian gods. A warning to all of us - trust only in the true God.

At the time of the instructions in our lesson, there has already been nine plagues. There has been:

- (1) Water turning to blood (Exo 7:20)
- (2) Frogs everywhere (Exo 8:6)
- (3) Lice, *or Gnats* (Exo 8:17)
- (4) Flies (Exo 8:24)
- (5) Livestock are diseased (Exo 9:6)
- (6) Boils, which is sores on both mankind and animals (Exo 9:9)
- (7) Hail (Exo 9:23) which destroys the crops
- (8) Locusts (Exo 10:12) which is like a grasshopper, it says,

**“<sup>14</sup> they invaded all Egypt...Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again.”** - Exo 10:14 (NIV)

We do have swarms of locusts today, in fact “desert locusts have been known to fly nonstop for up to 1,600 miles... a locust weighs only 2 grams, but eats its own weight every day... a swarm of

locusts can cover an area of 400 square miles with a density of 100 million to 200 million insects per square mile! A swarm this size can eat 80,000 tons of food each day... enough to feed 40,000 people for a year.” - Bartz, Paul A., *Letting God Create Your Day* - p 248.

(9) Darkness - “<sup>21</sup>... darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.” <sup>22</sup> ...pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. <sup>23</sup> They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived. ” -

Exodus 10:21-23 (ESV)

Still with each disaster, Pharaoh refuses to release the Jews from captivity. This is a pointed message to each of us to heed the word of the Lord.

**MAUNDY THURSDAY – PASSOVER – PICTURE OF THE LAMB OF GOD** - The instructions were: bring a lamb to be sacrificed that is without blemish - a picture of Jesus, who is without sin (Heb 4:15).

It is to be slain at twilight (the time between the decline of the sun and sunset). According to Josephus, it was customary to start slaying the lambs at 3:00 PM, which was the time Jesus died on a cross (Luke 23:44-46).

To avoid the death of the first-born, the blood of the slain lamb is to be placed on both doorposts and the lintel. The doorposts were the upright posts, and the lintel was the cross beam above the door that held the load. This is a picture of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross, and a shadow of what was to come.

After the lamb is roasted in its entirety in the fire, The Passover meal is to be eaten in haste. All that is not eaten is to be consumed in the fire (Exo 12:8-10).

There are bitter herbs, likely representing the bitter years of servitude (Exo 1:14).

The bread is without yeast, representing haste and affliction (Exo 12:11,39; Deut 16:3). Jesus used the term 'yeast' to refer to the teaching of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herod (Matt 16:6, 11; Mark 8:15, Luke 12:1 ) 'Yeast' is also a term used for sin (1 Cor 5:6-7; Gal 5:9). Paul proclaims in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians,

**"Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."** - 1 Cor. 5:7 (ESV)

Jesus *is* the Passover Lamb - the final fulfillment of the Passover. Peter reminds us,

**“<sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ”** - 1 Peter 1:18-19 (ESV)

The word 'ransomed' (or 'redeemed' in some of the translations), in Greek, literally means: to buy back; to purchase; to release by paying a ransom; or, to deliver by the payment of a price. In that culture, it was a term used when buying back prisoners captured by the enemy during a war. Our futile, vain, and useless ways of trying cannot pay the price that God demands for the freedom from sin and its consequences. Nor can the valuables of this earth, like silver or gold, pay the price

required price. It is only the blood of Christ - the sacrifice of Christ - that is ultimately paid to satisfy the judgment of God against our sin.

The instructions of Passover and its annual celebration illustrate Jesus as the ultimate substitute, ransoming, or paying for our sin. This death opens the door for us to receive His mercy. Peter declares,

**“<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ”** - 1 Peter 2:10 (ESV)

Peter is speaking to both Jews and Gentiles, who have now become one in Christ, having received the mercy of God that is granted to all who receive Christ and trust Him for their salvation.

He grants eternal life and now, a new life. He grants the very grace, mercy and peace that we all so desperately need each day, and for eternity. Don't let this escape you due to unbelief! Don't wander from the word that fills you with grace, mercy and peace, and come to the Lord's table! May you rest in Christ, the one who brings you grace, mercy, and peace - our very Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God, who has mercy on us.

In His name we pray, AMEN.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
AMEN.