

“ThanksPassover”

by Pastor Steve Hammond on 11/17/19
Text: Mark 14:12-26, at FBC of Newport, NH

//12 On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

//13 So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

//16 The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.//

—Mark 14:12-16

[This message is shorter today in order to make room for a Rock Johnson presentation.]

How do you communicate with people a thousand or more years off into the future? There are a number of ways it can be done. In the movies it's done by way of a time machine. Sometimes it's done by a strange electrical storm causing a ham radio set to connect between the present time and the past, which for the person in the past is still a communication with the future. So we're still addressing my question. A bit more realistically, there are time capsules. Items, pictures and newspapers are placed in a sealed container, buried by one generation and then dug up by a future generation. Trouble with all of the above is that the in-between generations get left out.

There are two very practical ways to communicate with people a thousand years off into the future. One is to write things down and pass them along from generation to generation. And the other is to eat a meal together. Not just any old meal, of course. But a meal designated to be a reminder of just what it is you want to say to the future generation(s), be that a hundred or a thousand years off into the future. So long as you keep eating that meal and let it remind you of its meaning, then the message will be passed along quite faithfully.

Our country has done this a number of times, as I'm sure most countries do. We remember the birth of our nation on July 4th by eating hot dogs and blowing things up, especially at night so we can see the colorful explosions. We also remember Jesus' birth by having a Christmas dinner and exchanging gifts. However, there is an effort the last number of years to erase this memory from our tradition. The resurrection of Jesus is

remembered with an Easter Sunday meal, but even more fundamentally it is remembered every Sunday, weekly, as it is both “The Lord’s Day” and “Resurrection Day.” (More on that later.)

Then, too, this time of year we remember the gratitude of some of the first pilgrims to come over from Europe and live on this continent—seeking freedom of worship. And we remember with a grand meal of turkey and stuffing and all the trimmings. Families gather, businesses close, the nation pauses and everyone is to give thanks in some way. It’s refreshingly simple and pure in its focus and expression.

But the granddaddy of all such meals of remembrance has to go to what God himself established when the new nation of Israel was freed from her bondage in Egypt and sent off to the Promised Land. God instituted the Passover Supper, which was filled with symbols of what took place to accomplish this freedom. Along with the supper were a series of questions and answers which would spell out the meaning of the symbols and the supper itself. We’ve been reminded of these meanings at our Maundy Thursday services, especially these last two years as we’ve followed the outline of a traditional Jewish Seder Supper (Thanks in large part to Sandy Woods’ efforts, by the way.)

And it doesn’t stop there. In this way of the Passover supper that first generation of Israelites communicated with Jesus’ generation twelve or fourteen hundred years later. And Jesus used this foundational memory built into the Passover meal to establish a new reminder pointing to a new freedom from the bondage of sin itself and an eternal Promised Land to which to look forward. Jesus’ sacrifice at the cross and resurrection on the third day was the making of a new covenant between God and his people.

And “his people” now would openly include both Jew and Gentile. To make sure we would remember this from one generation to the other, Jesus transformed the Passover meal into a new Supper, the Last Supper. “Last” because it was the last celebratory supper Jesus would eat with his disciples until his promised return. And maybe we can say it’s “Last” also because it’s a foretaste of the great banquet of the Lord, which will have no need for another reminder to follow.

Do you see what this means? The reminder that started out with the people of Israel for their liberation, has been opened up wide, beyond the confines of just the Jewish people. The whole world is invited to remember, not simply Israel’s freedom (which was temporary anyway) but everyone’s freedom—if we’ll have it—through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This seder supper is now everyone’s supper. All one needs to do is believe in “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*” and accept the invitation given in his name.

Imagine if the whole world were to celebrate the fourth of July as if it were the birth of a new nation as big as the whole world. Imagine if the whole world were to have a Thanksgiving for just One of the “Pilgrims” (or Indian) who proved himself to be the Savior, not just of the Pilgrims, but of the whole world.

But there’s no need to imagine it. For God has already done it through his people Israel, two thousand years ago. And he gave his generation a way to speak to our generation and every generation in-between, so we might remember and appreciate properly what God has done.

This year why not combine our celebration of Thanksgiving with the ultimate cause for remembering and giving thanks? Why not observe *ThanksPassover* by remembering our debt of thanks to God for what Jesus has done for his people two thousand years ago, and for “his people” being whosoever will receive Him and remember Him forever and ever.