

Epworth Chapel on the Green
March 29, 2018
Maundy Thursday
Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander

Exodus 12:1-14
Psalm 78:14-20, 23-25
I Corinthians 11:23-26
Luke 22:14-30

In our Old Testament lesson, Moses instructs the people regarding what is to become the seminal event in their history, their Exodus from Egypt. At the heart of their exodus from slavery is the event that inaugurates it – the *Passover*.

To prepare for the Passover, the people are to take lambs without defect and to slaughter them and to place the blood on the door frames of their homes, and then to eat a meal made from the lambs, along with the bread and bitter herbs.

The death angel will then pass through and strike down every first born male that is Egyptian, but when he sees the blood on the doors of the houses of the children of Israel, he will “pass over” those homes and they will be spared.

This event, the Passover, becomes the central event in all the Old Testament. It marks God’s deliverance of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt, and begins their identity as God’s chosen people. And it is to be perpetually commemorated.

The reason Moses commands the people to perpetuate this event by celebrating Passover through ritual meal and action is not because he is sentimental and wants the people to remember the “good ol’ days.”

The reason he commands the people to do this is because he knows that it is important for people who come along generations later to be able to take part in what God has done, *to experience this past event for themselves even though they are many years removed from it.*

And so, through the ritual words and actions of the Passover meal, the people who came along later did just that. They experienced anew their deliverance from Egypt and their identity as God's people.

Come with me now hundreds of years later into the first century. At the time of Jesus, many ancient Jews were waiting for the restoration of Israel in a *new exodus.*

The people were hopeful, based on the writings of the Old Testament prophets, that a new Moses would come and that God would use him to recapitulate the events of the first exodus from Egypt. This new Moses would lead the people on another exodus where there would be *New Covenant*, a new temple, and a new Promised Land.

With this longing at near fever pitch, Jesus sat together with his disciples in an upper room on a night much like this one. And he began to show his disciples that he was the *new Moses* who had come to lead the people in their long anticipated *new exodus.* As the leader of the new exodus, Jesus revealed to his disciples that ***he himself was the true Passover Lamb***, whose body and blood was

about to be offered up so that God's people might be delivered from their slavery -- a slavery not to Egypt, but to sin and its deadly consequences.

And so it is that through the offering up of himself as the true Passover Lamb, Jesus leads *us* out of slavery to sin and the old life, and into a New Covenant where we are born again to a living hope of resurrection and eternal life.

We are being led on a new exodus, brothers and sisters. This world is not our final home. We are looking for a city whose builder and maker is God.

But a new exodus requires a *new Passover*. The sacrifice of a holy, spotless, unblemished Lamb. For the full implications of what this means, we'll need to be back tomorrow and Saturday evening. So stay tuned.

In the meantime, let us give thanks for Jesus' wonderful and life-giving gift to us in the holy Eucharist.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.