

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity, November 10, 2019

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 146, 147, 358, 652, 205:1.

Exodus 12:21-41, 1 Corinthians 5:6-11, Luke 22:7-23.

Sermon Text: Exodus 12:1-14.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

God had promised Abraham that the land of Canaan would belong to him and his descendants.

But making their home there was interrupted only two generations later. Ten sons of Jacob were jealous of their brother Joseph's coat of many colors and their father's love for him. So they ended up selling him as a slave who ended up in Egypt. But because God was with him, he became second in charge in Egypt and prepared that land for a seven year famine. That famine also affected his relatives in Canaan and they had to come to Egypt for food.

Skipping lots of details, we have reached the time when the descendants of Abraham were terribly oppressed slaves in Egypt. More than 400 years after coming to Egypt God revealed his plans for their escape, led by Moses. Moses went to Pharaoh repeatedly asking if all the Israelites could go into the wilderness to worship the true God. Pharaoh refused and then said 'yes' and changed his mind repeatedly and hardened his heart repeatedly. God found it necessary to send ten plagues to convince Pharaoh to grant the request of Moses.

God sent one final plague upon Egypt. Today we look at

THE TENTH PLAGUE IN EGYPT – THE FIRST PASSOVER

- 1. This judgment, the worst plague, was necessary because of Pharaoh's hardening his heart.**
- 2. God rescued his people in an unbelievable way.**
- 3. The events of the Passover have great meaning for God's people even today.**

God told Moses to prepare the people for their Exodus from Egypt. The difference between Israel and Egypt and between Jehovah and the gods of Egypt was about to be revealed in a final terrible judgment from God. The judgment would be the death of the firstborn. *"This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt--worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.' Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel."* Exodus 11:4-7 (NIV)

The nine plagues God had previously sent to Egypt were

- Plague 1 — water turned into blood and fish died.
- Plague 2 — frogs.
- Plagues 3 and 4 — biting insects and wild animals.
- Plagues 5 and 6 — livestock disease and boils.
- Plague 7 — fiery hail.
- Plague 8 — locusts.
- Plague 9 — darkness.

Despite these terrible judgments on the land and its people, Pharaoh would not let God's people go. Oh yes, he said he would, but repeatedly changed his mind and hardened his heart. Finally God hardened his heart.

This tenth plague marked the beginning of something of great significance in the Old Testament up until the time Jesus said just before his death *"It is finished."* John 19:30 (NIV)

This was the beginning of a new era leading up to the coming of the Savior from all sin. So the calendar of the Jews was to begin at this time. God laid out some very specific instructions for the celebration of the first Passover and for every following Passover.

All of the annual celebrations of the Passover were leading up to Jesus Christ, our Passover lamb. Finally, the Passover lamb symbolized God's great Old Testament act of act of salvation as well as the deliverance of his people from Egypt.

The Passover was plainly celebrated up until the death of Jesus. In fact, we read in the Gospels ***"Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.'" Luke 22:7-8 (NIV) Jesus "said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'" Luke 22:15 (NIV)***

God gave some very specific instructions for this first Passover. Each household was ***"to take a lamb for his family, one for each household." "If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat."***

The lamb was to be carefully chosen. ***"The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect."*** Five days later, the lamb is to be slaughtered and – get this: ***"Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.*** This is probably the best known picture of this event. Ridiculous, isn't it! Painting the doorposts of your house with blood would save you? This idea of spreading blood on our doorposts is really quite disgusting to us. But listen to what this blood will do! It will save them. ***"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt."*** Notice carefully what they are to do and what is to happen. The lamb is to be roasted over fire, eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

They were to prepare unleavened bread – bread made without yeast – as we use in the Lord's Supper because that is the kind of bread that Jesus used at the time of the institution of the Lord's Supper – which was also the last Passover.

God emphasizes the unleavened bread. As they celebrate this day annually, we read: ***"For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat--that is all you may do. Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born. Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread."*** Exodus 12:15-20 (NIV)

We are reminded by the haste of preparing to be ready at any time for our own life of sin and slavery to end! We are surely living in the last times, and Jesus could come any moment to judge the living and the dead. In addition, we have no clue when our own life may end. Repeatedly in the Scriptures we find the picture of yeast, or leaven, used for sin. Just as yeast permeates the entire lump of dough, so does sin permeate our entire lives.

God told this first to Moses and Aaron. Then they told the elders. ***"Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning. When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down. Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants."***

They are also to celebrate this night when they get into the Promised Land. ***"When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Exodus 12: 25-27 (NIV)***

When God is repeating his laws for his Old Testament people, he includes these words: ***"Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover of the LORD your God, because in the month of Abib he brought you out of Egypt by night. Sacrifice as the Passover to the LORD your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place***

the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his Name. Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste--so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. Let no yeast be found in your possession in all your land for seven days. Do not let any of the meat you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain until morning. You must not sacrifice the Passover in any town the LORD your God gives you except in the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name. There you must sacrifice the Passover in the evening, when the sun goes down, on the anniversary of your departure from Egypt. Roast it and eat it at the place the LORD your God will choose. Then in the morning return to your tents. For six days eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day hold an assembly to the LORD your God and do no work." Deuteronomy 16:1-8 (NIV)

These laws of God were fulfilled in the real thing, Jesus Christ. Paul writes to the Colossians: *"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."* Colossians 2:16-17 (NIV)

We read in Hebrews about Moses and what the Passover meant at first to God's chosen people. *"By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel."* Hebrews 11:28 (NIV)

For all believers in Jesus Christ the Passover has special meaning. John the Baptist said this of Jesus: *"John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'"* John 1:29 (NIV) Jesus is the Lamb of God because he was sacrificed for sin, for the sin of all mankind. In his first letter, John is even more specific: *"the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."* 1 John 1:7 (NIV)

Significance for New Testament believers is also found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Christians: *"Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."* 1 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV) Those words not only call Christ our Passover lamb, but they point to the fulfillment of the Old Testament command to get rid of yeast at this special time. And what is the old yeast Paul is talking about here? Sin.

Everything about the original Passover and the Passover celebration was leading up to Jesus Christ, our Passover lamb.

Peter emphasizes how it is that we are redeemed from sin and eternal damnation: *"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."* 1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV)

Jesus is referred to as the lamb without blemish or spot. It is the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God that redeems us from sin and death. Before Jesus died on the cross, he celebrated the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper with his disciples. It is called the last Passover because Jesus was establishing the "new covenant" or "new testament" through his death on the cross. Jesus' blood would deliver his people from death by giving them the forgiveness of their sins. In keeping with the Old Testament meal of remembrance, Jesus gave his believers a New Testament meal of remembrance – the sacrament we call the Lord's Supper. Jesus took the unleavened bread and the wine from the Old Testament Passover and gave them to his disciples saying, *"'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"* 1 Corinthians 11:24-25 (NIV) We are to partake of this meal in remembrance of him, that is, remembering what Jesus did for us when he died on the cross.

In this Old Testament act of rescue or salvation, God pointed to a greater salvation act in the death of Jesus. We understand the Sacrament of the Altar better against the backdrop of the Passover meal.

Remember what Jesus did for you. He was sacrificed like the Passover lamb. His blood saved us. Just as the Passover lamb was to be roasted, Jesus suffered the pains of hell for us, in our place, so that by believing in him as our only Savior, we shall never suffer the pains of hell. For all this we want to thank and praise, to serve and obey God. Never forget that Jesus has redeemed you, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won you from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. All this he did that you should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. Amen.