

Mark 14:12-26

On the first day of the Feast 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?" 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. 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?' He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve.¹⁸ While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

A husband may mow the lawn, take out the garbage, and hold down two jobs because he loves his wife, but his wife may feel unloved and neglected because what she really wants is for her husband to hold her hand or give her a hug. Then again, a wife may put down her fork and knife at dinner, turn the TV off, and give her husband her full attention, but he still feels unloved. What he really needs to feel loved are the spoken words, "I love and respect you." Back in 1992 Dr. Gary Chapman wrote about that phenomenon in a book called *The Five Love Languages*. He said that there are five common love languages and if you didn't know your spouse's language you were in for trouble.

Now, I'm guessing that my telling you this isn't really an aha moment for you. Most of the time, we instinctively know that some people don't like hugs and some people really need them; and then, again, some people need a lot of attention and others just want you to say, "I love you." I bring all of this up because I want to point something out about us humans. We need to experience love in a lot of different ways. Why is that? Our fallen nature makes our hearts act like an abused dog – suspicious, untrusting, and shy. If we're not loved in a variety of ways or in the right ways, we'll grow insecure and feel unloved. That's the fallen divide that God has to cross to get to us. He will not leave us to ourselves to fail to receive and internalize

his love.

So what's this have to do with Maundy Thursday? Maundy Thursday is God's answer to that problem. Today we'll see in Jesus' set up and institution of the Lord's Supper that Jesus is making sure we receive enough love and love in the right ways.

A big part in coming to grips with Jesus' love in this section is seeing how carefully Jesus sets up for the institution of the Lord's Supper. In fact, the first two paragraphs here in Mark are just that. They're Jesus setting the stage. Maybe you noticed how ambiguous and yet, simultaneously specific Jesus' directions were. "Go into the city. A guy will be there carrying a jar. Follow him. You'll end up in a large, upper room that is furnished and ready." See what I mean? It's ambiguous and simultaneously specific. What does that tell you? It tells you that Jesus had an event in mind, a dramatic unveiling of his love that he was setting the stage for.

You know what this reminds me of a little bit? It reminds me of a guy setting up for a proposal. He tells his girlfriend, "Go to this place. Follow this person." He gives ambiguous, yet specific directions. And the goal is that she has just enough information to follow the directions to get to the perfect place for a dramatic unveiling of love, a proposal. And once she's followed the directions of her man, voila, there he is in this dramatic setting, down on one knee, ready to ask, "Will you marry me?" And if that doesn't let a girl know she's loved, then nothing will. What Jesus is doing here is clear. There is this perfect set-up so that he ends up in a close, relational setting with his disciples where he could dramatically unveil his love for them with the result that we would get an even clearer picture that we are loved.

And so the moment arrives, Mark reports, "**When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve.**" (v. 17) They sit down at the table and, then, Jesus ups the ante. He begins an incredibly bizarre and uncomfortable dinner conversation. Can you imagine this? You head to dinner at someone's house. You think it's going to be this light very fun or, at least, very friendly time and your host says, "Someone here is about to sell me out." And your host just lets that statement dangle out there. You heard what Jesus said, right? He said, "**I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.**" (v. 18) Talk about awkward. Talk about weird. Why did Jesus do this now? Why did he say it to the whole group and not just privately to Judas? Jesus wanted to up the ante for what he was about to do and say with all of them. In other words, he wanted the light bulb to go on in their heads so they'd think, "Jesus is about to be betrayed. That means I won't get to follow him around any longer. And that means I better tune in because this is his last will and testament to me."

Now I realize that I can say all of this to you (And, again, this is an aspect of our fallen nature.). I can show you how Jesus sets-up the perfect relational setting for you like a boyfriend who is about to propose to the love of his life. I can show you how Jesus starts a super awkward dinner conversation to up the ante in the room and really get your attention. I can show you all of that. And yet, you still may be

spiritually standing in the corner, arms crossed not ready to embrace Jesus' love. Why is that? It's because, like I said before, sometimes our hearts tend to act like an abused dog – uncertain, shy, and a little suspicious. If you stretch the metaphor a bit, you could even say we're even worse off than an abused dog because we inherited a psyche already damaged and abused by sin. And that's why it literally takes an act of God to make us confident, certain, and sure, that yes, today God reached out, took hold of me, and loves especially me.

That's why Jesus instituted this act of God: **“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take it; this is my body.’ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,’ he said to them.” (v. 22-24)** Untold sermons, books, and papers have been written on these very words. I'm not going to pretend to say everything there is to say about these words. They're profound, incredible and life altering. My only goal today is to show from these words how Jesus is reaching out to your tentative heart to make you confident and sure about his love.

Sometimes suspicious, untrusting hearts take the Kellogg's approach to Jesus. They may think, “Well, yes, that's nice that Mr. Kellogg's makes cereal for the whole world, but I really don't think that Mr. Kellogg's particularly cares about me.” And so people can know in their head that Jesus reconciled the whole world, but in their hearts they feel this way: “Well, he probably didn't really care about me or, at least, I can't be sure of that.” And so, someone can 'cause themselves to feel like the exception to the rule that Jesus died for everyone. But in a dramatic unveiling of love, Jesus made that impossible because he made it personal. Did you see what he did? He put his body on each person's lips. He put his blood there too. He made himself uniquely, especially, totally personal to – not someone else – but to you. Do you see that? At the moment when the sacrament hits your lips, you know this: At this moment, Jesus is loving me. Just me. This is his body. This is his blood. Not for the guy next to me. Not just for everyone else. This is for me. Just me. Do you see it? This is Jesus making himself uniquely, especially, totally personal to – not someone else – but to you. Why does he do this? He wants you to know that you are especially and personally loved.

But there's more that Jesus does here to show you that he personally and totally loves you. You can see it when Mark reports that Jesus said, “Take it,” referring to his body. Then they drank the cup. They ate. They drank. Do you see what Jesus just did? He made himself and his forgiveness tactile. He made it an experience. He involved the five senses in communicating his love. This wasn't just hearing a message through the ear. This was more, much more. This time Jesus involved the whole human person in receiving, taking to heart, and believing in his love. He involved your eyes, your ears, your taste buds, even your sense of smell. Do you see it? You see the bread and wine. You taste the wine. You drink it. You take the bread. You eat it. Jesus is involving your physical being in experiencing his love for

you. Why? He's communicating love to you in a human way. He wants you to know that you are loved.

A lot more could be said about the Lord's Supper. For now, just know this. You're loved. Through the Lord's Supper, Jesus is meeting the needs of your fallen nature. No worries. Jesus knows your love language. He's committed to bridging the gap and crossing the divide to your heart. There can be no more suspicions or untrusting thoughts. He's going to engage your senses in an experience. You'll see. You'll take. You'll eat. You'll taste. You'll drink. He's involving your physical being so you'll feel that much more loved. More than that, he makes it personal. You can't feel anymore like Jesus died for everyone except you because in a few moments arriving to you – just you – is his body that died for you. And arriving to you – just you – is his blood poured out for you. In that moment, you'll not only be, but will also know and even feel, "I'm loved by Jesus. Just me." Amen.