

Thought for the Week 15th November 2020

Matthew 26:17-30 **The Last Supper**

¹⁷ On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

¹⁸ He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

²⁰ When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

²² They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?"

²³ Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ 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."

²⁵ Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "You have said so."

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

³⁰ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The term 20/20Vision is often used to denote perfect vision or normal vision, which means you can see exactly what you should be able to see at a distance of 20 feet. Others would say that the only true 20/20 vision is hindsight. Have you ever said, "If I knew then what I know now, I would have..."

We make decisions on a daily basis, not knowing exactly how they will turn out. Perhaps we make a decision because we are on a deadline. Then we often learn new information which, had we known it at the time, might have caused us to make a different decision. When we have all of the facts we can always see more clearly. Would the government have made different decisions back in March if they had known how things would turn out? Would they have encouraged us to "eat out to help out" if they had known it would help to spread the virus even further? Probably not.

On the evening before the crucifixion was to take place, the Disciples, along with Jesus, gathered in an Upper Room. Matthew tells us of several things that took place that day...

- They would prepare for the Passover
- Jesus would wash the feet of the disciples

- Jesus would identify Judas as the one who would betray Him
- Jesus would give His last speech to the Disciples
- Jesus would institute the Lord's Supper

The Apostle Paul records for us in 1 Corinthians 11, the details that he was given by the Lord himself of what happened at the Last Supper. At the close of the Passover, when they received the bread, Paul tells us that Jesus said, *"This is my body which is broken for you, do this in remembrance of me."*

The disciples were totally puzzled by this. They were still trying to grasp that Jesus would be going away. It must certainly have troubled them, because the words he was speaking were a bit like words that would normally be spoken at a funeral or memorial service - when we look back and consider the life someone has lived; the highlights; what they stood for, what their legacy is and how we honour them. But Jesus was speaking these words while He was still alive, so those who were there were more than a bit puzzled. Yet, after Jesus rose again and ascended into heaven, when they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit and when they began the work Jesus given them in the Great Commission; then, with hindsight, what had happened at the Last Supper became very clear to them. As they began the work of spreading the Gospel and building the church, they realised the importance of remembering just what Jesus had done for them. And the importance of the symbols of bread in wine in making it real to them. Maybe sometimes we wonder what it is we need to remember when we break bread and drink wine together.

We remember what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

His birth changed all of history from B.C. to A.D. - "Before Christ" to "Anno Domini" (the year of our Lord). Even though the secular world has tried to change it to BCE (before the Common Era and Common Era) the numbering stays the same so we can say that Jesus literally changed time. H.G. Wells said, *"I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as an historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very centre of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history."*

But in actual fact the major event that change history wasn't Jesus life, but His death on the cross. It is the pivotal moment in human history, for without His death our sins cannot be forgiven and we cannot experience the peace that forgiveness offers to us. Dr Billy Graham said that he believed that while Jesus was on the cross you and I personally were on His mind. That's an amazing thought - isn't it?

The cross is such a pivotal point in history because that's where everything changed, where forgiveness of sin and salvation by faith in Christ was made possible for all and Jesus was saying to the disciples at that first Lord's Supper and to us every time we celebrate it, **don't ever forget it.**

We see crosses every day. People wear them as a necklace, cemeteries are covered with crosses; churches have them, some even think of them as a lucky charm. We fancy them up, we adorn them with gold, but the truth is the cross was a heavy, rugged piece of wood, designed for the sole purpose of executing those who were guilty of crimes they had committed. Crucifixion was reserved for those who had committed the worst of crimes. Murder, theft,

criminal violence, rebellion against the government. Obviously crucifixion was the most painful, the most publicly humiliating kind of execution. They were crucified naked on the side of the road for all who passed by to see. Crosses were not made for the innocent; but for the guilty. But Jesus wasn't guilty of anything. However, because of his great love for us, he took on the guilt of our sins, shed His precious blood for our sin and covered us and protected us from eternal separation from our heavenly Father in Hell. Why? Because God so loved. Love drove Him to the cross. If you remember anything, remember what Jesus did for you on the cross, especially today as we receive communion.

We also remember Jesus in Lord.

This communion which we are about to celebrate isn't just about remembering what Jesus has done for us in providing such a great salvation. It isn't even just about being thankful that he has saved us. It is also about re-committing ourselves to him and to his service. It's about putting Jesus first in our lives, allowing him to rule over everything as Lord of all Things.

In Romans 14 Paul says: *"For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life, so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living."*

You may have heard quotation from the great missionary servant of Jesus, Hudson Taylor, *"Christ is either Lord of all, or he is not Lord at all."*

The Theologian and writer John H Yoder talks about the person of Christ and his lordship over all of our lives when he writes: *"Christians begin to deny their Lord when they admit that there are certain realms of life in which it would be inappropriate to bring Christ's rule to bear. Of course, non-Christians will insist that we should keep our religion private and out of their way. But the reason for that is not that Jesus has nothing to do with the public realm, it is that they want nothing to do with Jesus as Lord. . . . What we believe about Christ and his lordship over our lives must apply to all our behaviour, no matter how many of our neighbours remain unconvinced."*

So as today in our service we gather around the table of our Lord, or wherever we are we must remember what he has done for us on the cross. And we can use the words of Isaac Watts' hymn, and particularly the final verse, as an act of re-dedication to Christ as the Lord of our lives.

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.