

The Crucial Hours †† Sermon 474, 03-02-2022 †† Maundy Thursday

“*Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,*” Mark 9:24.

“*Domine, volumus Jesum videre,*” John 12:21.

Matthew 26:18 “I will keep the Passover.”

They have discovered a cure for everything. No sickness, no contagion, no end of life, no death. No side-effects, no after-effects, no risks to the cure for everything. What would you do to get it? How far would you travel? How much would you pay? What would you sell? To what great lengths would you go in order to get your hands on the cure for everything? At what cost would you take possession of this treasured medicine?

In some places you can get it every week. You are asked to read the label and the directions for use, but once you agree to it, it is entirely free and costs nothing. Every other medicine just treats the symptoms or the symptoms of the symptoms. No antidote or vaccination or tincture can amount to this food that Jesus gives us. It is of course the Lord’s Supper.

This evening, we will talk about its discovery story. Consider Jesus’ words ...

I WILL KEEP THE PASSOVER

I. The Passover is bigger in Jesus Of course Jesus was going to keep the Passover that evening; it’s what every Jew was doing. If, however, there were anyone who could have thought, “I think I have more pressing things on my mind right now,” it would have been Jesus. He had the Jewish equivalent of the senate plotting to get rid of Him, a traitor in His midst, and a band of self-centered, quarreling disciples surrounding Him. If anyone ever had a good excuse to skip the Passover (or to say, “I’m going to do Passover in my own way this year”), it was Jesus! If anyone could have said, “I need some ME—time. I need to put myself first for now,” it would have been Jesus. But He didn’t. Instead, He kept the Passover.

He even took charge of the whole affair. He arranged for a guest room, an upper room, where He could celebrate with His disciples. He appointed Peter and John to make the preparations, to ensure that they would have a lamb “*without blemish or defect*” and have it killed. Jesus served as the Host at the

meal itself, distributing unleavened bread. Yes, leavened bread might have tasted better, but Jesus would keep the rubric that the bread be unleavened. I suppose He could have miraculously removed the alcohol or invented pasteurized grape juice, but a historical survey will show that the liquid they drank was alcoholic grape wine.

For Jesus to keep the Passover is more reassurance that our Substitute kept everything written in God's commands. The Passover itself was to highlight the old work God did in bringing His people out of Egypt. It was the blood of the Passover lamb that protected them from the 10th plague.

However, to keep the Passover was bigger in Jesus. For the Passover meal was even more than a remembrance of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt through the blood of a lamb. It also was a shadow/ foreshadowed God's deliverance of His people from sin through the promised Messiah. He would sacrifice his body and shed His blood to save us from our sins.

We get so interested in worldly medicines and cures. With the insulin I take, I live it every day, a balancing act to try and keep my blood sugar at target levels, in between 80 and 150 mg/dL. Many of you take pills, shots, wear a brace, push a walker, cough, deal with pain all day. Many of us know nothing about that battle. Sin has taken its toll. We battle the temptation to think more about earthly needles and pills, treatments and oils, than we think about the Lord's bread and cup. This is a medicine and a meal to long for, to hunger and thirst for.

But in the Lord's promise, "*I will keep the Passover,*" exists the guarantee, "*I will keep you safe in me, and I in you. I will drink a cup of glory with you at the heavenly banquet when all is well and all is right. At this table of Holy Communion, you have this medicine of life eternal already now.*" For in this bread and in this cup is the forgiveness of our sins, and therefore the grace to give us faith, and the power to bring us to believe in the one medicine that saves forever.

II. The Passover is Jesus Once they sat down, Jesus said to them, "*I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*" (Luke 22:15). He wanted to host this meal. Just imagine! A King has no business desiring to eat and drink with His poor subjects, with His meager servants. But this King is different. He longs to gather around the sinner, the filthy rich and the poor and destitute, and put everyone on the level playing field of His banquet, so that we

might have communion not only with the King. We might have communion with one another.

Now Jesus did not just arrange the Passover Lamb, but He became the Passover Lamb. John the Baptist had proclaimed that Jesus was the one who would not only keep the Passover feast in obedience to God but also would be the final fulfillment of that feast. John said, "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*"

We remember the events of the upper room that night because of the lasting significance of the Lord's Supper. Jesus made a promise to be in the eating and drinking. He promised not only to unite God and sinners, not only to unite every one of us who would commune together, but also to unite His body and blood with the bread and wine.

Now unlike baptism, in this sacrament there is warning. There are instructions on the label of this miracle medicine. In South America, adventurer Richard C. Gill was astounded to witness the natives with their poison-tipped arrows. The poison was called *curare*, and it could paralyze a beast with the tiniest dosage as long as it broke through the skin. Then their prey would asphyxiate and be ready for a meal. However, when a native was suffering under certain neurological conditions, the same *curare* poison was placed in a drink and given to them for a powerful muscle relaxant. In the same way, communion without recognizing the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord is a poisonous sin. But when a sinner has examined himself, and has approached the Lord's supper with a believing heart that the bread and wine are as Jesus says it is, then communion is the all-powerful cure for any guilt, any ill will, any doubt, and any trespass.

Finally, when the meal was completed, after Jesus had kept the Passover according to the details commanded by God and with the pure heart God desired, Jesus really kept the Passover. Jesus really filled the prescription. For He went to the cross where, like the Passover lamb, He would die instead of sinful people. There He paid for every time that we have failed and refused to keep a part of God's commandments. He paid for our dependence on earthly cures, our idolatry of health. He paid for our thoughtless grumbling or unbelieving abuse of the sacrament. Because Jesus did it perfectly, there is no need to keep the old Passover year after year with sacrifice after sacrifice.

The Passover is now the Lord's Supper. We do this in remembrance of Him.

We may—and will want to—remember Jesus' keeping of the Passover in the upper room and his fulfilling of the Passover on the cross. You can do that especially by taking and eating, taking and drinking. You hear about and worship the One who perfectly kept the Passover—and all things—for you.

You can also show your love for Him by keeping His commandments. In 1 John we read, "*This is love for God: that we keep His commands*" (5:3 EHV). It may seem like a small thing when you have an opportunity to love your neighbor by doing a small act of kindness for him, but it's a big deal to God.

Then keep this Lord's Supper dear and true to your heart. In this Holy Communion you have the reality of the Passover. In it you have the fulfillment of the Passover. For in it you have Jesus.

The Father has diagnosed your illness of sin. The Son has filled your prescription. And the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, administers it to your very heart; in His name, Amen.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.