



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Deep Dive: The Passover

Week 13: Matthew chapters 25 and 26

The Passover tradition was an important festival for the Israelites. It was grounded in their foundational story. They were a people who once were stuck living in Egypt and God freed them with a series of plagues and the leadership of Moses. Everything about their Jewish identity centered around this story. Observing the rituals of Passover was of tantamount sacredness.

Talking to the Kids
The story of Jesus' last supper with his disciples is the story of the Passover. Jesus and his disciples are in Jerusalem for this major holiday tradition. And this meal is based on the story of the Exodus, when God sent 10 plagues to Egypt to liberate the ancient Hebrews from their slavery in Egypt.

the Passover refers to the final plague when God sent an angel to kill the first born children of the Egyptians, and this angel passed-over the Hebrews because they sacrificed a lamb and painted that blood on their door frames. It is actually a very gruesome story, because God is actually taking the lives of Egyptians. But God is also liberating the Hebrews.

And now this same passover is a story saving us, without the God sending the angel for anyone's death.

So when we share communion it is a way of remembering these two Bible stories.

The slaughter of the lambs, the ritual recalling how lamb's blood was painted on the door frames so the angel of death would pass over their houses, took place on the 14th day of the month called Nisan. The festival of Unleavened Bread began on the 15th day of Nisan and continued for 7 days. By Jesus' day, these two festivals were celebrated as one, and their names became interchangeable. The Gospel writer of Matthew uses the term Passover for the events taking place, though he does not give us much in the way of details about how the Passover meal itself was observed.

There are modern day Seder meals which Jewish people still observe today. These meals have ritual story telling, foods that are highly symbolic, and parts for children and adults alike to participate in. Some modern Christians have found a way to use the modern Seder to weave in the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. Though, these attempts are often culturally inappropriate, and fuse in anti-Jewish sentiment, so we should avoid participating in a Christian seder.

Matthew uses this setting of Passover to emphasize a couple different points. One, Jesus has authority. Where in Mark, which Matthew is copying, the disciples ask about where to set up dinner ... here, Matthew turns this into a command given by Jesus - "Go into the city ..." and the disciples follow the directions. And, Jesus also announces his "hour" has come. This is a Kairos moment, the word Kairos referring to some divine appointed moment. Matthew contrasts this Kairos moment with the word for Judas finding the "opportunity".

For us today, we have ritualized communion with the simple words found not here in Matthew, but in Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians 11. So it is hard to not read Matthew telling us about Jesus lifting the cup and imagining ourselves at worship and in the moment of our own sacrament. But take a moment to sit with this story, to reflect on Jesus giving himself to the disciples, to the church. The word body really refers to Jesus infusing his whole self into this; and the word blood represents again Jesus' whole life. Matthew is writing to people who have never met Jesus. And Matthew is conveying the reality that Jesus is still with them today. And here, in this meal which we remember what Jesus did for us, is that way Jesus is with us still.

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

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