

Given and Poured Out for You

Mark 14:12-26 (NIV84)

¹² 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?" ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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?' ¹⁵ He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." ¹⁶ The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. ¹⁷ 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." ¹⁹ They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" ²⁰ "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ 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." ²² 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." ²³ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. ²⁵ "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." ²⁶ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

That last Passover meal that Jesus and his disciples shared, I don't know about you, but I get kind of a Thanksgiving Norman Rockwell print stuck in my head. Jesus is at the head of the table, roasted lamb being carried in by one of the disciples, the rest of the Twelve gathered around with smiles on their faces, happy to be enjoying this special meal. This was a purposefully intimate event that Jesus wanted to have with his disciples. And for a moment, it is such a happy scene, a heart-warming dinner.

But one of those happy faces is hiding something: Judas'. At this point in Holy Week, Judas has already gone to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. He already has the money in his pocket. Now he's just waiting for the opportune moment. This private meal would have probably been the perfect place. Problem for Judas was that he didn't know where they were going to have this meal until Jesus took them there.

As they eat unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, roasted lamb, and drinking the grape wine, everyone is relaxing, maybe sharing some jokes as they banter about who is the greatest. Maybe they are telling stories, recounting some of the greatest things they've seen over the last three years. Maybe they are discussing theology, God, the meaning of life, the universe, and everything. It's a good time until Jesus makes the cutting declaration: "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." (verse 18)

The chewing stops. The smiles instantly relax and turn grim. You can hear the pin-drop silence. Some eyes dart around the table, measuring up their fellow disciples. Other eyes simply look down at their food, appetite gone. They begin to utter one after another, "Surely not I?" The question expects a no answer, but not the kind of question that is being arrogant, something like, "It couldn't possibly be me!" No, it was a question. "It's not me, is it? I don't think it's me. I don't think I could do that. I don't want to do that, but could I end up being that one? Could something happen that would lead me to do such an awful deed? Might I betray Jesus?"

Can you imagine Judas' conscience burning with the knowledge that he has already made an agreement to do this very thing? "I thought I was so careful. I thought no one followed me, that no one knew. But he knows. He always knows. Maybe no one will figure it out. Maybe Jesus is bluffing." But Jesus leaves no room for interpretation. As Judas dips his bread into the bowl with Jesus, he asks, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answers, "Yes, it is you." (Matthew 26:25)

Judas Iscariot is known as one of the lowest of the low. You put together a top ten list of the worst traitors of all time or one on the worst people of all time, Judas is going to show up somewhere on that list, if not number one. You call someone a Judas, you are pretty much telling them to pull the dagger out of your back.

Surely we are not as bad as Judas. He plotted this thing out. He came up with a sign to hand Jesus over: a kiss from a supposed friend. He left that Passover supper just to carry out his arrangements. This is premeditated sin. We wouldn't do that to Jesus. No amount of money would get me to betray Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Hosanna in the Highest, right?

All sins have a price, and we weigh it out. It goes into every temptation we face. The idea pops into our heads to do something that we know we shouldn't do. We start to calculate, assessing the risk vs. reward. The greater the reward vs. the risk of fallout that I might receive, the more I consider the sin, the more I even start to plan out and plot the sin. I may not sin for money, but other benefits and rewards sway me. I am lured away by the promised payoff of sin.

Have you ever planned to sin? I'm sure that we can think of all sorts of examples of good things that we intended to do but never got around to them, but have we ever planned to sin? Stop and think for a moment. And there it is. There was my plan. I worked it out ahead of time. I premeditated it. I think that I even got away with it. I told God that I would follow his ways, that I would live according to his Word, but I actively planned the contrary. By doing so, it is as if I put a dagger in the back of God.

Are we any better than Judas? No. I am just as guilty of planning out sin against God and against others. I have betrayed Jesus. I have betrayed God. I may not have taken 30 pieces of silver or led a mob to arrest Jesus or betrayed him with a friend's greeting, but I betrayed my loyalty to Jesus when I chose to sin, when I planned and carried it out. Because I am such a sinner, it would be better for me if I had not been born than betray my God so deliberately, to actively choose evil because I wanted to, because I thought that the promised payoff of sin would be better for me. My choice, my premeditated sin has damned me. Put me on that same top ten list of worst people of all time. That's my reality. I am no better than Judas; I am just as guilty. I am Judas.

Jesus - knowing that Judas will betray him, knowing that Judas had already planned it out with the chief priest and had exchanged money with them, knowing that Judas would do it that very night – he makes it clear that this betrayal, this grievous sin against God does not change anything. "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him." (verse 21)

Jesus will not turn back. Knowing what Judas would do, knowing that his disciples will leave him in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing that Peter will deny him three times, Jesus goes just as it is written about him and then does this: "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." (verses 22-24)

During that Passover meal which commemorated deliverance from death, Jesus delivered all of his disciples from the death of their sins. All his disciples had betrayed him with premeditated sin and would do so again. To betrayers Jesus gave his body and his blood along with the bread and the wine to be a new covenant. This new covenant is the one sided contract where God forgives sins and remembers wickedness no more purely because that is what he decides to do. He reached out to his disciples to give this new covenant to them saying, "Take and eat. Take and drink. This is given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." The disciples are actively consuming this new covenant; they are eating and drinking the forgiveness of their sins.

This same meal is given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. The new covenant, this one-sided agreement that God forgives sins and remembers wickedness no more is not just for those disciples in that room on that Thursday night. This is what Jesus hands to us as well as we celebrate his Supper. We come up to this table having examined ourselves to God's standards, knowing that we have premeditated sins, betrayed Jesus, and need his forgiveness. As betrayers, broken with sin and deeply conscious of it, Jesus gives us forgiveness. We are no better than Judas, but that does not stop Jesus from giving us his body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins, both spiritually, supernaturally as in this Last Supper, and physically as he will go to the cross on Golgotha hill.

What we receive at this table is the proof that God has forgiven all our sins. Your conscience can bother you no more. God has given us the new covenant where he promises, all on his own, to forgive our sins remember our wickedness no more. We feel it with our hands, smell it, taste it, see it, and hear it. This is given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of your sins, every treacherous sin. He remembers them no more!

As you come to the Lord's Supper, your premeditated sins, all of your sins are no longer your burden. Bring your guilty conscience up here with you, and leave it here. God holds no animosity against you or me for our sins because Jesus' body and blood has been given and poured out for you for your forgiveness. Jesus knew that we would constantly battle temptation and that we would fall and even sometimes plan to fall. So he gave them something new. He gave them his Supper. This is the new covenant where Jesus' body and blood forgives us our sins and thus God remembers our wickedness no more. He gave it to us as well. Partake in his Supper, given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of your sins. Amen.