

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

"This passage is one of the most well-known in scripture, but often it is also one of the least followed." (Ryan Quanstron)

COCU 28A. Easter Week. Thursday

Readings

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.

**Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.**

What shall I return to God for all God's bounty to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of God,

I will pay my vows to God in the presence of all God's people.

Precious in the sight of God is the death of God's faithful ones.

O God, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl.

You have loosed my bonds.

I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of God.

I will pay my vows to God in the presence of all God's people, in the courts of the house of God, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

Psalm 116 is sung or read each year at Passover celebrations in Jewish homes to this day. It would have been sung when Jesus celebrated a meal with his disciples at Passover time. It is a part of the collection of psalms running from 113 to 118, called the "Egyptian Hallel" (Egyptian praise), centering on the story of the deliverance from Egypt. Psalm 113 is a hymn. Psalm 114 reports the event of the exodus. As the central act of God's saving activity, the exodus is to the Old Testament what the cross-resurrection is to the New Testament. Psalm 115 then celebrates this event with a call to praise. Psalm 114 tells the story of the nation's deliverance from bondage and is followed by words of praise (Psalm 115:1, 18). Psalm 116 now tells the story of an individual's deliverance from death, followed by words of praise, in Psalm 117. Psalm 116 begins in a rather unique way, with the psalmist declaring love for God (v 1). It is much more common for the psalmist to speak of trusting God, seeking refuge in God, or waiting for God. The word "love" (āhab) does not connote an emotion as much as a commitment of loyalty. The psalmist pledges fidelity to God because "God has heard my voice and my supplications" (v.1). But what the psalmist pledges in loyalty to God is not obedience to cultic or moral legislation. Rather the psalmist simply promises to "call on God as long as I live" (verse 2). Psalm 116 recognises reliance on God as the supreme expression of faithfulness.

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.

This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

The nation of Israel was founded upon an act of sacrifice. Even after 3 cycles of 3 judgements had fallen upon the land of Egypt, Pharaoh still refused to relent and let the Israelites go. Before our text, Moses announced one final judgment yet to come: the death of the firstborn. Between the record of this declaration and the event of the judgment, we read of the institution of the Passover.

The observance of the Passover and the death of the Egyptian firstborn should be held in the closest of relations, two sides of a single event. The outcome of the conflict between YHWH and Pharaoh was to be the deliverance of Israel, YHWH's 'firstborn son', and the death of Pharaoh's firstborn (cf. Exodus 4:22-23). On account of Pharaoh's resistance, YHWH claimed all of the firstborn sons in the land of Egypt, either in judgment or by setting them apart through redemption (cf. Exodus 13:1-2, 11-16; Numbers 3:13). As in the divine

provision of a ram as a substitute for Isaac, YHWH provided redemption for the sons, who then came to embody YHWH's claim upon the nation, itself spoken of as YHWH's firstborn (Exodus 4:22). As Numbers 3:13 declares, 'all the firstborn are mine; when I killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the firstborn in Israel, both human and animal; they shall be mine.' In the sacrificial event of the Passover, the firstborn sons of Israel, standing as representatives of the whole nation—a role that will later pass to the Levites—are claimed as God's special possession, a position of both privilege and danger.

The Exodus begins the time of the nation, both in its history and yearly cycle - 'This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you.' It also is the event at the heart of Israel's time, the celebration that constitutes Israel in the dynamic space between its past and its eschatological future. Various myths have been forged to account for the foundation of nations (eg Hobbes and Locke). The narrative of the Passover should be read as another such national foundation myth. It is through the Passover that Israel is constituted as a nation and from it Israel derives its fundamental meaning. Reading it in such a manner proves instructive: Israel achieves its foundation, not through a contract or compact between its members to ameliorate a violent or uncertain state of nature, but through the divinely instituted ritual of a sacrificial meal within a crucible of apocalyptic judgment. Through this event, the nation of Israel, celebrating in its constituent families, is established as the bearer of a divine meaning - as the 'firstborn son' of YHWH (themes of birth pervade the first half of the book of Exodus).

(A taster of an article by Alastair Roberts, The Politics of Sacrifice, <http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/the-politics-of-sacrifice-exodus-121-14/>)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Instead of turning the Lord's Supper into an occasion to exhibit social distinctions, the Corinthians needed to be reminded of what the Eucharist is for: remembering Jesus and proclaiming his death until he comes. They ought to partake in the Lord's Supper in a way that demonstrates their unity rather than their divisions." (Dwight Peterson)