

Matthew 26:17-75, The King's Covenant

Everyone loves a good meal. There's almost nothing better than good fellowship and good food. When those ingredients, no pun intended, are excellent, you got a meal firing on all cylinders. While we love being at awesome parties, the reverse is also true, we hate missing out, we hate not getting the invitation and not getting to enjoy the party.

The hope this morning is not in doing more, or doing better, or becoming someone you aren't. The hope we have is Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

As we tread through chapter 26 today, we are coming nearer and nearer to the cross of Christ, the centerpiece of all history, and the hope of the world.

I'm going to read the text in its entirety. I want us to catch the narrative force. It's more narrative than propositional. So we will read the entire text to see what is going on and then we will dive back into what is the main teaching section at the passover and looking at the text as a whole.

The first thing as I want us to see as we dive in, is...

1. We've broken our covenant with God

Now, there's a couple questions we must get answered. You might be saying, what in the world is a covenant?

A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties with stipulations—blessings if you keep the covenant, curses if you break the covenant. Fulfill your side of the agreement, you get blessed. Fail your side of the agreement, you get cursed.

But you say, hold up, I haven't entered into a covenant with God?

Covenants do not have to be entered to voluntarily by equal parties. They can be imposed from one party on another, especially in the case of a greater to the lesser. In the Bible, God the creator imposes a covenant on His creatures.

Although the word covenant is not specifically used, all the content is there, in the very beginning, when God created Adam and Eve, in Genesis 2. Remember, a covenant requires blessings and curses conditional upon certain acts. That's what we see. God tells Adam and Eve, if you do not eat of the tree, you will have eternal life. Conditional blessing. But if you eat of the tree, you will die. Conditional curse. Blessings and curses based upon obeying God's rules. Adam sins, and so humanity goes with him. Inheriting a sin nature, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We are children of wrath.

Hosea 6:7, "But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me."

In our passage this morning, we see that things haven't gotten any better. The same pattern of sin continues. It riddled with sin. As we near the cross, our sin is magnified.

1. We see those **accusing Christ**. The crowds come out to capture Jesus as if He's a robber. Then Caiaphas, the high priest, and a council of religious elites, seek to accuse him to put him to death. They accuse him of blasphemy. How dare Jesus say He's God!?
2. Which leads to those **Condemning Christ**. Based on their accusations. v.66, "He deserves death"

3. Then those **Mocking Christ**. They spit in his face and struck him. Some slapped him, saying , prophesy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?
4. We see those **Disobeying Christ** as we turn to the disciples. Jesus tells them that they must pray and watch with Him. Over and over they fall asleep instead of praying with Him. They disobey Him, also a sign of spiritual blindness and a failure to perceive what is going on. Weakness on display.
5. And we see them **Abandoning Christ**. In v. 35, all the disciples say they are with Jesus in life and death. In v.56, all the disciples left Him and fled.
6. Next we see the **denying of Christ**. Peter, leading the charge as perhaps the most confident here, we see in the last section here, three times he's confronted with an opportunity to confess His allegiance to Christ, and three times he denies Jesus.
7. Finally, we see the **betrayal of Christ**. Judas, as one of Jesus own followers. When Jesus says someone sharing the bowl with Him, He means its someone close. A close friend. And this is Judas. Who comes in the night, using the sign of a kiss even to point to who Jesus is. Intimate betrayal.

Now what's our tendency as we hear this list... accusing Christ, condemning Christ, mocking Christ, Disobeying, Abandoning, Denying, Betraying... Our wicked tendency that would seek to avoid the exposing and illuminating light of the Holy Spirit on our own sin. We would join the disciples In Matthew 26:22, where Jesus says one of them will betray Him, they are shocked... and their response is probably better translated "you can't possibly mean me, Lord?" or... "Surely, not I, Lord."

We see a similar glimpse into this tendency later, Jesus says, you will all fall away, Peter jumps in v.33, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.

This is our tendency. "Surely not I. Not me. Oh no!"

We must not try to hide from the truth about ourselves. We are not great. We aren't heroes. We are not holy. We are not righteous. We aren't any better than Peter, or Judas, or the crowds. This is us. The same nature in them is the same nature in us. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

You might say, well when did I ever deny Christ, or betray Christ, or not follow Christ?

When you live for yourself. When you choose self glory over His glory. When you are ashamed to talk about Christ. When you don't treasure and esteem Christ. When you think drugs, sex, social media, golf, or your kids are more precious than Jesus. When its your way instead of His way. When you trust in your own religious performance. When coming to a church service makes you feel like you checked off the religious box. When you have a good moral action and secretly pat yourself on the back. You are betraying, denying, condemning Christ.

So what?

The consequence for breaking the covenant is death. We are to be judged.

Exodus 14:7-8, **And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." 8 And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."**

The penalty for breaking the covenant is blood. The ratification of a covenant, literally the cutting of a covenant, is the shedding of animals, cutting animals, sealing it with blood, in effect saying, should I break this covenant, let me be slain like one of these animals. It's a legal exercise.

This should cause in us deep grief. Like Peter, we should weep. I'm not getting into emotionalism here, but we should respond appropriately. Emotionalism is emotions at the expense of intellectual thought, or using emotions as the metric to judge spirituality. Emotions rightly ordered are appropriate. You wouldn't accuse someone whose weeping because they lost a child that they are being too emotional. Our stream of christianity fears some of the abuses of emotion, and so we tend to cut off that part of our lives. We're whole creatures. We should have some sort of experience of grieving our sin. And what's more, an experience of grieving that we've dishonored the King. So I'm not just grieving because my sin brings consequences, I'm grieving because I've not rightly honored and esteemed the One who infinitely deserves worship. So my grieving is Christ-centered. It stems from seeing the beauty and majesty and worth of Christ, and how my life does not reflect.

And I'm rightly judged for that. We agree with the Holy Spirit that we are guilty and deserving of death. The Holy Spirit brings conviction into our hearts, by first letting us see the glory of Christ, and then seeing our fallenness, and agreeing, with Him, yes I deserve to be punished.

But precisely into this picture of despair comes the delight of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The King bears the covenant curse for us through His suffering

26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, 28 for 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 again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

We see this as Jesus teaches during the Passover meal, giving new meaning to the Passover feast. The Passover, you may remember from last week, was a celebration the Jews were commanded to do in remembrance of when God delivered them out of slavery in Egypt.

Exodus 12:12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. 13 The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

The blood was the blood of a lamb without blemish, put over their doors. God passes over, or spares the Israelites, as He judges Egypt. And this is the celebration that goes on for generations. Here at this Passover celebration many years later, Jesus points to Himself as its fulfillment, but then does something interesting, He intertwines the meaning of Passover with the covenant.

He says, verse 28, **"this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."**

By doing this, He's showing that all along, the Passover was just a type of something that was to come. Passover symbolized God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt and an anticipation of the Promise Land in Canaan. The Lord's Supper symbolizes God's deliverance from slavery to sin and anticipation of the coming kingdom.

Their ultimate problem was not the Egyptians. It was their own wicked hearts. Freedom from physical slavery pales in comparison to freedom from spiritual slavery. And this is why Jesus came. Matthew already made this

clear to us in chapter 1:21, “He will save His people from their sins.” Jesus has come to save His people from sin.

In the covenant the sacrifice of animals blood was used to continue the relationship with God, over and over, blood was required to pay for sins, continual sacrifices had to be offered. But here, its the sacrifice for sins to end all sacrifices. The price, the blood of an unblemished lamb, the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

“Jesus himself explains the significance of the bread and the wine. The broken bread represents his body, which was about to be broken by blows, scourging and crucifixion. The wine represents his blood, which is about to be poured out in order to inaugurate the new covenant and to bring forgiveness of sins to many. Just as the old covenant was established by God with his people Israel at Sinai was inaugurated by blood sacrifices (Ex. 24:8), the new covenant, which would bring forgiveness of sins to all peoples, both Jews and Gentiles, was inaugurated by blood on a Roman cross. The language used by Jesus concerning his body being ‘given for you’ and his blood being ‘poured out for many’ points to the sacrificial nature of his death.” Andreas Kostenberger

The cup that Jesus blesses is the cup of God’s wrath. We see this later as Jesus prays, Father, if it be your will, let this cup pass from me. The cup, being the wrath of God on sin. He’s going to pay the penalty for our sin. He’s not dying as a martyr, He’s dying as the sacrificial lamb of God paying the penalty for the sin of the world. The agony of Christ is not merely physical, its spiritual, being the righteous One, whose One with the Father, having the wrath of the Father poured out on Him.

Gal. 3:10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ...13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”

For means “on behalf of” “in the place of”. How much rich blessing is there in that one preposition! Christ became a curse for you! You must see yourself in the many!

The other side to the covenant is its promise of blessing. We’ve had our consequence for sin taken away, but we still have a problem, we aren’t righteous and therefore can’t inherit the promise. Here too comes the beauty of the gospel.

3. The King secures the covenant blessing for us through His obedience

Do not eat from the tree and I will give you life. Obey my Word, and you will be blessed with eternal life. Adam failed miserably, and we are the offspring of Adam. But Jesus fulfills God’s Word. He keeps God’s Word. He upholds God’s commands, to love God with all His heart, mind, strength, and soul, this is what Jesus does. From His birth to the last breath that He takes, Jesus, obeys the Father, not only in His external actions, but in His affections as well. We need a righteous representative and substitution on our behalf.

In our passage today we see Christ’s perfect righteousness as He perfectly submits to the will of the Father. Jesus knows His time has come for Him to be delivered up. This is not Christ’s idea only, it’s the Father’s. He’s fulfilling the plan of the Godhead laid out before the foundations of the world. In complete submission, with obedience meaning the worst pain imaginable, more than physical pain, this was spiritual, as we will see in a minute. Jesus prays, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, *not as I will, but as you will.*” He prays the prayer three times. Perfect submission. The heart of Jesus above all delights in the Father and desires to please the Father in obedience.

We see another display of the perfection of Jesus character as He remains self-controlled and submitted as Judas comes to betray Him. Jesus submits to the arrest. One of his disciples cuts off one of their ears. Jesus

tells him to put back the sword. If fighting was what Jesus wanted to do, He could do it, and call down legions of angels. That is, in fact, what the flesh would have you do. And Jesus' humility and restraint would continue through His arrest and trial. He doesn't fight back. But Jesus isn't after vindicating Himself, He's after entrusting Himself to the Father. Glorifying the Father. And we see that played out as Jesus multiple times in the passage, this happened so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled. Jesus submitted to the Father under the Scriptures.

In time of temptation, Jesus remains faithful.

Jesus does this to rightly honor the Father, but also to represent us to the Father. It's His account of righteousness that's being applied to us. We haven't made the grade. We've bombed it. We've all been tempted and failed, miserably. Red ink all over our exam. F. zero. And Jesus steps in, takes the exam, hands it to the professor, 100%, perfect score, and writes our name on His paper. We get the grade through His performance. You say that sounds like cheating. No, it's grace. Believing in Jesus you get His grade. You get His righteousness. That's what it means to be clothed with Christ. When God looks at you, your heart, your life, what He sees is 100% because He's looking at His Son Jesus. We're hidden in Christ.

So Christ fulfills the covenant. He now represents us. Not Adam. Christ succeeded where Adam failed. That righteousness gets imputed to us, given to us as a gift. That life of righteousness means eternal life with God. The fullness of the blessing comes to us through Christ's work. As happy as God is with the Son, so is He just as happy with us.

A lot of people distinguish between the covenant with Adam being a covenant of works, and then with Jesus it's a covenant of grace. But when you think about it, the covenant of grace is a covenant of works, it's just not your works. It's Christ's! Grace is the work of Christ, bearing the penalty for sin and living a righteous life, applied to believers.

"Not your will but mine" was the prayer of Adam, from Paradise to desert anguish. Jesus prays "Not my will but yours" was the prayer of Christ, from anguish to paradise. From Gethsemane to glory.

Jesus says He will not drink of the vine again until He does so in the new kingdom. This is the greater exodus, and the greater Promise land. Egypt to Canaan. Slavery to sin in a fallen world, to righteousness with Jesus forever.

This is the great covenant blessing. Life eternal. Christ has delivered us. Christ has represented us. All climaxing in the cross. In the new heavens and new earth, Christ will be there, the Lamb of God, slain for the glory of the Father and the joy of all nations.

What holds you back from Christ?

One pastor remarks, "The original Last Supper is attended by traitors (v18) and cowards (v50); it is a table not of merit but of grace."

The Lord's death is that table for you to feast on. Grace upon grace beckons you. Let no sin restrain you from coming. If you feel unworthy, that's the point! What evidence of the Holy Spirit working in your heart! Come, fling yourself on Christ!

Take... eat. Drink... all of you. We must participate. Eat by faith. Drink by faith. Believing on the finished work of the Son. Let us partake by faith now, as we look forward to taking again in the immediate presence of the Son in the Father's kingdom.