**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from Maundy Thursday 3-28-2024
Jesus and Passover**

God has many attributes and all of them are important. Each of His qualities reveals the LORD as being the perfect God that He is. He is loving. He is holy. He is compassionate. He is all-powerful. He is kind. He is patient. He is generous. He is joyful. He is merciful.

All of these are important. All of them, together, help us to see God more fully. He is like a beautiful diamond. Every angle of Him is beautiful and perfect. He is not one-dimensional. He is multifaceted and complex, but entirely good.

One of these attributes of God is that He is just. This means that God will not ignore sin and evil. Because He is fully good, He must be fully just. He simply cannot look the other way.

This attribute of God – that He is just and must address sin – plays a big part in grasping what the special day called Passover is all about. Passover is the climax of God demonstrating His judgment against the powerful Egyptians and their idols whom they worshipped.

God had brought about a series of plagues over Egypt. There had been 9 plagues so far and each of the previous plagues demonstrated God’s power over the false gods of Egypt. With each of the plagues, God was revealing Himself to both the people of Israel as well as the Egyptians. God was saying that it is He, Yahweh, who holds the power over nature, over animals, over light and darkness. All things whom the Egyptians had worshipped. God was essentially saying through these actions, everyone needed to turn from their lifeless idols to follow Him – the living God.

And then, through one final act of God’s just character, He announces one last plague. This plague was that God would strike down all the first-born of the land. In Egypt, the first-born male of Pharaoh was considered a god and God was making it clear that only He is to be worshipped.

And we must remember that God is completely just in His actions here. God is not evil. He is not a murderer. He is just. And as the Creator, He has the right at any time to uncreate anyone. And because people have chosen to reject Him as God and instead to worship lifeless idols, God is completely just in punishing this disobedience.

Furthermore, God made a way for His judgment to pass over anyone – Jew, Egyptian, whomever - if they would do what He said. Anyone that would heed God’s directions would be spared.

I invite you to turn with me to Exodus 12:1-11 as we read God’s instruction to Moses and Aaron: **1The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 2“This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. 3Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. 4If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. 5The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. 6Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. 7Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. 8That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. 9Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. 10Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. 11This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord’s Passover. 12“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. 13The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.**

There is a lot in here. But it begins with the LORD telling Moses and Aaron that this event, this coming Passover Event, is to be the month that they should understand as the first month of the year for them.

Why would it be the beginning? I think God gave this instruction because it would bring Israel into a new season of existence. Beginning with this event, they would be a free people. They would be slaves no more.

And we see God giving very specific instruction on what needed to be done in order for God’s just wrath to pass over them? Each household needed a lamb or a goat. This animal must be perfect, without defect.

The animal needed to be slaughtered and some of the blood of the animal needed to be taken and smeared on the sides and tops of the doorframes to the homes where the Passover meal would be eaten. And they were to eat the meal dressed ready to leave at any moment from their bondage.

As you are likely aware, not everyone heeded these instructions from God. There were many people that God killed in His just wrath against sin that night.

But for those that had the blood on their doorframes, that blood marked those households. And when God saw the blood of the spotless animals, this would cause God’s wrath to pass over these homes. The sacrifice was honored by God and God’s just wrath was poured out on it, rather than on the first born of those houses.

Now after this final plague, Pharaoh would command the Israelites to leave Egypt. And their new life as free people would begin. But this day of Passover was to be a lasting reminder to them about God’s just wrath passing over them on the night that they were set free from slavery in Egypt.

Looking at Jesus Christ, He would of course celebrate this Passover Festival many times. We read in Luke’s Gospel of when Jesus was 12 and goes up to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

And when you look at Holy Week, Passover is right at the heart of it. The Last Supper is a Passover meal that Jesus is sharing with His disciples. They would eat the traditional foods to be eaten at Passover. This is why we are highlighting Passover on this special day today – Maundy Thursday.

The word “Maundy” is the Latin word for Command. The Jewish people were to be reminded of God’s command to celebrate the Passover. We remember His commands on what needed to be done for God’s judgment to pass over them.

But we also remember the new command that Jesus gives on the night of Maundy Thursday – the command for His followers to love one another.

The word Jesus uses for love is agape. Followers of Jesus are to agape one another. This means that they are to love one another with God’s love. To love each other deeply and self-sacrificially. To love in the way that Jesus loved His followers and served them and honored them. This is demonstrated so tangibly in Jesus washing their feet that same day.

And Jesus Himself, on Maundy Thursday, forever transforms the Passover into something even more significant. He reveals that He Himself is going to be the Passover Lamb – the sin bearer.

For after the supper He would take bread and tell His followers, **“This is my body, given for you.”** And as He took the cup of wine, He would say, **“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”**

Jesus would that night begin His sufferings as the perfect, sinless, Passover Lamb.

Jesus would be fulfilling Passover, once and for all, in Himself.

In the Jewish understanding of time, which begins the day begins in the evening at sundown, Jesus knew that by the beginning of the next day, He would be dead.

His body would be beaten. His blood would be shed. And the blood would be smeared onto the frames of a Roman cross.

Jesus was making a way for anyone and everyone who puts their trust in Him to escape God’s just wrath. All people, except Jesus Himself, stand guilty before God and worthy of His just wrath.

But God chose to become the Lamb Himself. Even before the world was founded, it appears that Jesus volunteered for the job of being humanity’s sin bearer. He Himself would be the One who willingly took the just wrath of God upon Himself.

Jesus felt the weight of the sins of the world upon Himself. It was heavy. It was very heavy. Even as Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was sweating drops of blood. The mental and emotional burden was on Him. The Father sent an angel to comfort Him and strengthen Him for what He still needed to do over the next day.

And Jesus felt the weight of sin upon Him as He hung on the cross. Far worse than the humiliation of being stripped naked and mocked repeatedly was feeling temporarily forsaken by God the Father on the cross.

But Jesus did not give in. He remained on the cross until He gave up His spirit and died.

Now friends, how do we begin to process all this? What are we to make of Passover in light of Jesus Christ?

**Simply put, we must remember that Jesus fulfilled Passover in Himself**. Passover, then, becomes another opportunity to remember Jesus as our Passover Lamb.

The offer is to all. All of humanity is deserving of God’s just wrath. We have all sinned against our good and holy and loving God and deserve punishment.

But God made a way so that whosoever believes in Jesus will not suffer God’s just wrath. His body and His blood are more than enough. He was perfect, spotless, sinless, and He willingly offered Himself for us as our sacrifice.

His body was given. His blood was shed. When we receive Holy Communion, tonight or on any occasion, it is an act of us telling God that I trust in Jesus as my Passover Lamb. When we take the bread and eat, we are saying through our actions that we put our trust in Jesus’ perfect body that was given for us. And when we drink of the juice, we are telling the LORD through our action of drinking that we believe that Jesus’ blood smeared on the cross was more than enough for God’s judgment to pass over me.

Friends, God hasn’t changed. He is still just. He is still wrathful against sin. When people pass away, they stand before God. And the question is do they trust in Jesus as their Passover Lamb, as their sin bearer?

When Jesus comes back to earth, it is the same question. Did this person put their trust in Him as their Passover Lamb?

Friends, the choice is ours. He doesn’t force himself on anyone. It is always an invitation. But His way is the way of life. At the original Passover, it was the first-born sons that were killed, wherever the blood of the lamb was not covering their door frames.

Jesus Himself, while being one of the Persons of God, is also the Son of God the Father. Passover points to Jesus, because this innocent Son would willingly lay down His life on behalf of the whole world. Our role is to believe in Him. Our job is to surrender to Him and to follow Him and to fully trust in Him, that sacrifice was more than enough. He willingly did all of this for us.

God’s wrath passes over us as we trust in Jesus. We need not fear physical death or disease or anything else. Why? Because Jesus, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. And not only that, He lives. He is alive. And we can talk and should talk with Him each and every day. He loves us. He is for us.

So may Passover always be a special day of gratitude for us as Christians and may we live in the freedom that He has purchased for us by His grace. Amen.

Resources:

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

<https://www.al.com/living/2015/04/five_things_to_know_about_maun.html>

Five things to know about Maundy Thursday: What does 'Maundy' mean?