

Date: April 14, 2022  
 Sermon Series: *Holy Week: Maundy Thursday*  
 Sermon Title: *"Love Never Fails"*  
 Scripture: Luke 22:7-27; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8  
 Preacher: Peggy Peek

We celebrate Maundy Thursday to remind us about the Passover Meal that Jesus celebrated with his disciples the night he was arrested. What do we know about this event—this Jewish holiday?

The Passover festival commemorates the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt. Exodus 12 provides an explanation of the origin of Passover: ***"This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance....Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. . . .And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.' Then the people bowed down and worshiped."*** Exodus 12; 14,17,26-27

In general, the Passover was a home festival. If you were traveling, you had to find a home to celebrate the holiday. People would bring their Passover animals to the Temple in the late afternoon for the sacrifice. At the meal, everyone ate at least a portion of the Passover animal, along with various herbs, unleavened bread, and a dip made of nuts and fruits mixed with vinegar. They also served wine.

After the meal begins, a child will ask *"Why is this night different from all other nights?"* The answer given as a teachable moment is from Deuteronomy 26: 5-11

***<sup>5</sup> "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. <sup>6</sup> But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labor. <sup>7</sup> Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. <sup>8</sup> So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. <sup>9</sup> He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; <sup>10</sup> and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me." Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. <sup>11</sup> Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.***

And a bit later those gathered sing Psalm 113, part of which reads:

***<sup>21</sup> I will give you thanks, for you answered me;  
 you have become my salvation.***

***<sup>22</sup> The stone the builders rejected  
 has become the cornerstone;***

***<sup>23</sup> the LORD has done this,  
 and it is marvelous in our eyes.***

***<sup>24</sup> The LORD has done it this very day;  
 let us rejoice today and be glad.***

With this background, let's read our text about the Passover meal that Jesus and his disciples shared. In honor of God's word and the power it has to transform lives, please stand if you are able:

Luke 22:7-27

***<sup>7</sup> Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."***

<sup>9</sup> *“Where do you want us to prepare for it?” they asked.*

<sup>10</sup> *He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, <sup>11</sup> and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ <sup>12</sup> He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there.”*

<sup>13</sup> *They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.*

<sup>14</sup> *When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”*

<sup>17</sup> *After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”*

<sup>19</sup> *And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”*

<sup>20</sup> *In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. <sup>21</sup> But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. <sup>22</sup> The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!” <sup>23</sup> They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.*

<sup>24</sup> *A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. <sup>26</sup> But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*

Jesus shares with his disciples this wonderfully meaningful holiday meal with his disciples and as in many family gatherings over a holiday, a dispute begins. The dispute at the end of Jesus’ Passover Meal with his followers shows that they misunderstood the true nature of God’s Kingdom. Jesus makes two points about true greatness.

First, do not seek the honor that comes with age or experience and second, to be truly great, you must serve. In John’s account of the Passover Meal, Jesus has washed his disciples’ feet. This reversal of roles reveals the true nature of God’s Kingdom. Jesus did not come to serve and sacrifice for us so we could be powerful and prominent, he came and sacrificed for us so we could be like him—that should be our aspiration.

Years later, Paul teaches about the value of the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11—that we proclaim the Lord’s death (broken and spilt for us) until he comes again and then Paul expounds on how we are to live in God’s Kingdom in the meantime in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

*13 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging or tinkling cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

*<sup>8</sup> Love never fails.*

Several weeks ago, while I was channel surfing, I found a favorite movie, *Places in the Heart* on that I had not watched in a while. It always moves me because, first, it is set in Texas. It is about a widow during the Great Depression. My great grandmother was a young widow on a farm during the depression and this movie brings that era to life.

Second, the first time I saw it was in college with a group of my friends. We decided to have a movie night and rented several movies to watch at someone's apartment. In my group of friends there were a couple of guys from Waxahachie, Texas where this movie is set and was actually filmed in the mid 80's. Greg and Scott insisted that we watch this particular movie—and throughout the movie they kept pointing out friends and Sunday School teachers who had parts as extras in the movie. And as much fun as it was to listen to them proclaim the greatness of "the Hatch" as they referred to their hometown, we were all touched by the message of the movie.

Let me run down the basic plot of the movie in case you haven't seen it or haven't seen it in a long time:

*Places in the Heart* was a movie set in Waxahachie, Texas during the depression. The husband and father of two, Royce, is the sheriff of Waxahachie; he lives with his wife Edna who is played by Sally Field and their two children, Frank and Possum, on a 40-acre farm outside of town. He is called away from Sunday lunch for an emergency: a young black man, named Wylie, has gotten drunk and is shooting off a gun down by the railroad tracks. Just as the boy is about to hand the weapon over to the sheriff, it accidentally discharges. Royce, the sheriff, is hit and dies immediately. The white men of Waxahachie lynch the teenager, which all too often happened in an era which community justice was not just.

We then watch as Edna begins to figure out how to provide for her family as a widow with young children to support. She asks her sister Margaret, *"What's going to happen to us? I can't support this family. I haven't the least idea how to do it."* The banker who holds the mortgage to Edna's home urges her to sell the farm. But she is determined to stay.

One day a black itinerant farm worker named Moses, played by Danny Glover, appears at Edna's door and offers to work in exchange for food. When Edna refuses to give him a steady job, he steals some of her silverware. Later, he is picked up by the police and brought to Edna's home with the silverware. With a measure of grace, she forgives Moses or Moze and hires him to plant and harvest a cotton crop on her land. It is the only way she believes she can earn the money she needs to make her mortgage payment.

Later in the movie, the banker arrives with Mr. Will played by John Malkovich, his blind brother-in-law who lost his sight during World War I. Edna agrees to take him on as a boarder. Mr. Will, who supports himself by caning chairs and making brooms, is a lonely and bitter man who quickly states: *"I don't need your help, and I don't need you to feel sorry for me."*

At first Moze and Mr. Will are strangers to Edna and her children, Frank and Possum. They slowly become friends. When a tornado sweeps across the farm, these five individuals become a family. Each risks his or her own life to save another. The bonds that are forged during this disaster help them meet the biggest challenge—harvesting the cotton and getting it to the cotton gin in time to win the bonus prize for the first crop.

While Edna struggles with the farm, her sister Margaret supports her family by running a small beauty parlor in her home. Margaret discovers her husband has been having an affair with her best friend. She struggles with forgiving that betrayal.

The Ku Klux Klan in Waxahachie are enraged that Edna trusts Moze, a black man, as a business partner and friend. When Moze also proves to be a shrewd cotton grower, the KKK attack him and nearly kill him. He decides to move on.

The closing scene takes place in a church that we are about to watch. It starts with the end of a sermon and then we see the congregation share communion—our version of a Passover Meal. Let's watch and then I'll have a few things to say to conclude.

## MOVIE CLIP

This ending is about hope—hope for this life and the life everlasting. The Kingdom of God is now. It is not just for after we die—the presence of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit is for now. The movie takes artistic license to show the Kingdom of God is for Now and also for Not Yet. The congregation in the clip shows characters both alive and those already with Jesus. And it shows them at peace with one another—peace that begins with forgiveness because we have been forgiven. I think Jesus—as he sat with his disciples at the Last Supper was able to see the Kingdom with his disciples as Now and also Not Quite Yet.

We take communion to remember Jesus' sacrifice—But the forgiveness for our sins is a present reality ALREADY. And the peace of Christ that Jesus offers us is a present reality ALREADY.

In a moment we will approach our tables of fellowship to share in the Lord's Supper. You can come alone or with a friend or with your family. This isn't designed to be efficient but to be reflective of Jesus' sacrifice for each one of us. For those of you joining us online, we invite you to reflect on the scriptures on the slides that you will see and take the bread and the cup when you are ready. We will close with a prayer at the end.

Now if you are His, this is yours.