

LENT 2024

JOURNEY to FREEDOM

THURSDAY 28TH MARCH

READ: Matthew 26:17-30

‘the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.’

Matthew 26:19

New and improved. We often see this description in advertisements in shops trying to sell their latest products. I’ve found it quite annoying ever since my dad pointed out to me during one trip to the supermarket that something can’t be both new AND improved. If it’s new then there hasn’t been one before; if it’s improved then in a real sense it isn’t new, it’s just an old one made better. New and improved... I don’t think so!

However, as in so many other ways Jesus blows the usual rules out of the water. Jesus’ passover meal with his disciples is both much improved and radically new. How so? Jesus and His disciples, in what we now call the Last Supper, are meeting for what?.. for a Passover meal. We know all about this meal. Moses was told: ‘take some of the blood [of the lamb] 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’ (Exodus 12:7-8). This is how God’s people are to remember their great salvation for centuries to come, with a meal. Much like we gather round meals at key moments like birthdays, anniversaries, and Christmas to look back and to remember, so with the Passover. Salvation from slavery remembered, marked, celebrated. Each ingredient in the meal has its own symbolism; each ingredient reminds them of one part of that story.

Jesus and His followers are being obedient Jews and keeping the Passover requirements in Exodus 12.... but with a difference. In this meal, a Passover with no mention of the lamb (more tomorrow!) bread and wine come to represent, to be, Jesus Himself. The meal, a Passover meal for sure, is improved by the actions, words, and presence of Jesus. This isn’t just a Passover meal, it is truly something radically new. A meal which no longer merely reminds, but now actually connects to the sacrifice, feeds those who receive it both physically and spiritually, and transforms those who digest it into something, someone, new. Passover, yes. Something more, most definitely. New and improved... I think for once this may be right.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, thank You for giving us in the Eucharist a new and improved Passover that we might eat Your body and drink Your blood, and so be strengthened for our own journey to freedom. Amen.

The Revd Michael Print, Vicar of St George’s & All Saints’, Chorley