

## **Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of July 7, 2024**

### **Weekly Prayer**

Redeeming God, send your Holy Spirit to fall afresh on me today. Nourish and nurture me, that by your grace, I might love you more deeply, follow you more closely, and proclaim your justice and peace more fervently. In the name of your Son, our Savior, Brother, and Lord, I pray: Amen.

### **Monday, July 8**

#### **Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

I received a tradition from the Lord, which I also handed on to you: on the night on which he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread. After giving thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this to remember me." He did the same thing with the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do this to remember me." Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you broadcast the death of the Lord until he comes.

#### **Observation**

This is the earliest written account of the Lord's Supper. Paul wrote these words 15-20 years before any of the Gospels were written. And it highlights for us the importance of the sacrament within the church. Cultural practices at the time would have stressed the importance of social rank, which would determine who you would share a meal with. But Paul shares this practice of communion that is intended for all people, together as one body. No matter your social standing, this meal of grace and forgiveness is for you.

#### **Application**

When we celebrate communion, our liturgy includes the language from this passage, including the command to "remember me" and reminder that we "broadcast" the message of Christ with our whole being. Communion is a meal that nurtures our faith and is a tangible experience of God's grace. How might you "broadcast" the goodness of Christ in your life today?

#### **Prayer**

Living Lord, thank you for the Lord's Supper, where I can experience your grace and forgiveness. Thank you for welcoming me at your family table. Amen.

### **Tuesday July 9**

#### **Scripture: Exodus 12:1-7, 13, 21-27**

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month will be the first month; it will be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole Israelite community: On the tenth day of this month they must take a lamb for each household, a lamb per house. If a household is too small for a lamb, it should share one with a neighbor nearby. You should divide the lamb in proportion to the number of people who will be eating it. Your lamb should be a flawless year-old male. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You should keep close watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month. At twilight on that day, the whole assembled Israelite community should slaughter their lambs. They should take some of the blood and smear it on the two doorposts and on the beam over the door of the houses in which they are eating.

The blood will be your sign on the houses where you live. Whenever I see the blood, I'll pass over you. No plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Then Moses called together all of Israel's elders and said to them, "Go pick out one of the flock for your families, and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood that is in the bowl, and touch the beam above the door and the two doorposts with the blood in the bowl. None of you should go out the door of your house until morning. When the LORD comes by to strike down the Egyptians and sees the blood on the beam above the door and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over that door. He won't let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you down. You should observe this ritual as a regulation for all time for you and your children. When you enter the land that the LORD has promised to give you, be sure that you observe this ritual. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ritual mean to you?' you will say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, for the LORD passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. When he struck down the Egyptians, he spared our houses.'" The people then bowed down and worshipped.

### **Observation**

Using a hyssop branch to put the blood of a sacrificed lamb on their doorposts delivered them from death into life. By God's power, they were able to leave captivity and live as free people. These symbols are at the core of a Passover meal and are part of our sacrament of communion as well. Christ tells us that it is by his body, his love, that we are saved and set free.

### **Application**

Passover was also called "the Festival of Unleavened Bread" (Exodus 12:17). For them, that preserved the memory of a departure so rushed that there wasn't time to let bread dough rise, of a moment when God's people had to respond NOW, not later. Have you ever faced a situation in which delay was practically the same as refusing to move at all? How can you live ready to respond to God, even if it leads to unexpected changes in your life?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you asked your people to honor symbolically how you set them free, protecting and redeeming us. Help me to honor your life, death and resurrection, by the way I live my life. Amen.

## **Wednesday, July 10**

### **Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:24-25; Exodus 13:3**

After giving thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this to remember me." He did the same thing with the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do this to remember me."

Moses said to the people, "Remember this day which is the day that you came out of Egypt, out of the place you were slaves, because the LORD acted with power to bring you out of there. No leavened bread may be eaten.

### **Observation**

The word "remember" was fundamental to Israel's Passover observance. Israelites were to remember that their freedom was not due to their own wit or strength, but because of God's grace and action on their behalf. As Christians, we, too, are called to remember the power and action of God in our lives, trusting that we too, are redeemed by the actions and love of Christ.

### **Application**

This invitation to "remember" is not just about "not forgetting" - rather it is an invitation to make our remembrance a part of our daily life. The way we move, act, and behave in the world is a

sign of our remembrance of the saving work of Christ in our life. How is it that you remember? How does sharing in holy communion sustain you?

### **Prayer**

Holy Christ, surround me with your love and goodness. Keep my heart tuned to your grace, that my whole life is in remembrance and honor of you. Amen.

### **Thursday, July 11**

#### **Scripture: Luke 22:14-27**

When the time came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles joined him. He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I tell you, I won't eat it until it is fulfilled in God's kingdom." After taking a cup and giving thanks, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. I tell you that from now on I won't drink from the fruit of the vine until God's kingdom has come." After taking the bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, he took the cup after the meal and said, "This cup is the new covenant by my blood, which is poured out for you. "But look! My betrayer is with me; his hand is on this table. The Human One goes just as it has been determined. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays him." They began to argue among themselves about which of them it could possibly be who would do this.

An argument broke out among the disciples over which one of them should be regarded as the greatest. But Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles rule over their subjects, and those in authority over them are called 'friends of the people.' But that's not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant. So which one is greater, the one who is seated at the table or the one who serves at the table? Isn't it the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

### **Observation**

We hear one account of how Jesus initiated the sacrament of communion with his disciples. One piece that I am always started by, is that even while Jesus is breaking the bread and offering the cup, he knows that those around him will betray and deny him. It's much simpler to share a holy meal with those whom you're certain are faithful. But Jesus offers the bread and cup to us as gifts of forgiveness, *because* he knows we are imperfect.

### **Application**

This reminds me that we needn't wait to be "ready" or "perfect" to receive the blessings and gifts of God. Instead, in the words of Romans 5:8, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The gifts of Christ are yours, right now! May they heal, forgive, and move you to a new way of being. But also: these gifts are for all people. Do not let the imperfections of others cause division, rather let us see how we are all seated at the table of Christ, recipients of his redeeming and perfecting love.

### **Prayer**

Loving Jesus, thank you for seeing and knowing me fully – and loving me anyway. Help me to recognize my imperfections, and allow them to draw me nearer to you, that I may fully know your forgiveness and grace. Amen.

### **Friday, July 12**

#### **Scripture: Luke 22:14-18**

When the time came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles joined him. He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I tell you, I won't eat it until it is fulfilled in God's kingdom." After taking a cup and giving thanks, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. I tell you that from now on I won't drink from the fruit of the vine until God's kingdom has come."

### **Observation**

Again, we read from Jesus' last supper with his disciples. They are preparing to eat, but Jesus says, "I won't eat it until it is fulfilled in God's kingdom." This is a promise that the kingdom of God will come. Not IF, but when. For Jesus, there is no "maybe" - he is confident that God's kingdom will be known.

### **Application**

How is it that you hope in the promised kingdom of God? Do you live as though you are waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God? Recently I read a book where the author called us "co-conspirators" with God. I love this! We are a people for conspire for good, always seeking to draw near (ourselves & others) to God, that we might experience fully Christ's redeeming love. We are made partners with God, helping to reveal and unleash the love of Christ in the world. And when we do, we make known the kingdom of God here, as well.

### **Prayer**

Holy God, thank you for making me your partner and co-conspirator in life. Give me confidence to trust that your kingdom – that is, your mercy, love, and peace - are near. Help me to be one who makes way for your goodness to reign. Amen.

### **Saturday, July 13**

#### **Scripture: John 1:23-29**

John replied,

*"I am a voice crying out in the wilderness,*

*Make the Lord's path straight,*

*just as the prophet Isaiah said."*

Those sent by the Pharisees asked, "Why do you baptize if you aren't the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered, "I baptize with water. Someone greater stands among you, whom you don't recognize. He comes after me, but I'm not worthy to untie his sandal straps." This encounter took place across the Jordan in Bethany where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

### **Observation**

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Where did he get that? With nearly 200 Biblical mentions of "lambs," this is the only use of the phrase "Lamb of God." It is a reminder that just as God saved the Hebrew people with the blood of the lamb, so now does God save all people through the love of Christ.

### **Application**

Agnus Dei is Latin for "lamb of God" and is a sung prayer that is part of the communion liturgy for many churches. If you, like me, have experience within a Catholic Mass or Lutheran worship, you might recognize these words: "*Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.*" The prayer reminds us

that Christ is both *of* God and *for* us, a fulfillment of God's promise to be with us, to redeem us, and to the embodiment of God's saving love for all the world. How is it that Jesus has saved and transformed your life? How is it that Jesus, the Lamb of God, offers you mercy and peace?

**Prayer**

Lamb of God, you sacrificed yourself as a sign of your never-ending love for me. Be with me now. Surround me by your loving care and transform me today. Set me free from what binds me and help me to know the fullness of your mercy, love, and peace. Amen.