



We are continuing our journey to the cross through the Gospel of Mark. At this point in the story, we are just hours away from the cross. The disciples have followed Jesus' sovereign instructions in getting everything ready to celebrate the Passover Meal in Jerusalem. The Passover Meal was the Jewish holiday in which they celebrated their rescue from slavery in Egypt. Everything they ate and drank during this meal was meant to symbolize something about their rescue story. In our text today, Jesus leads His disciples through the elements of the Passover Meal, but, as He does, He takes the things that once pointed to their rescue from slavery and uses them to point to their coming rescue from sin – which is ultimately what they were always point to. He starts with the bread.

**“Jesus took bread”** || As Jesus takes the bread, not only is He bringing them back to the story of their hasty departure from Egypt, but He is bringing the disciples into a story that began immediately after **the fall** where man's **curse** was connected to bread (**Gen 3:14–21**). In the context of sin, death, Satan, the curse, and the promise of One who would come and destroy the enemy, God's promise to His people is that they would eat bread.<sup>1</sup> The first time we ever hear about **a priest** in the Biblical story is when King Melchizedek appears (out of nowhere) with bread and wine for Abraham (**Gen 14:18–20**). This man who is a both a king and priest celebrates **the victory** of God's people over their enemy by offering them “*bread and wine*.” When God's people were wandering in the wilderness, **God sustained them** with “*bread from heaven*” (**Exod 16:8–15**; cf. **John 6:51**). Bread was the meal that priests would eat in the Presence of God as they offered **sacrifice for sin** (**Lev 6:16**). In the story of Ruth, bread was the sign that **God had visited His people** (**Ruth 1:6**). In the NT, the apostle Paul said that bread is a picture of **the church** (**1 Cor 10:17**): as thousands of individual pieces of grain are brought together to become part of a single loaf of bread, so God gathers different individual people and makes us a single body – which is His body. All this is to say that when “*Jesus took bread*,” it's not because it was handy or convenient (e.g., *potato chips, Cheez-It's, rice cakes*) – He was bringing the disciples into a story that God had been telling from the beginning: a story of sin, curse, hope, the gift of a high priest, and the supernatural provision from heaven.

**“He...blessed and broke it”** || The only way to give this bread to His disciples was for it to be broken. The disciples have already heard Jesus refer to Himself as “*the bread of life*” (**John 6:48**) and “*the living bread*” (**John 6:51**), but the only way He can give His life to them is if He is broken for them. And His body was about to be broken beyond the point of recognition (**Isa 52:14**): *a crown of thorns shoved into His skull, whipped until every inch of His body was shredded, nails driven through His wrists and feet, a spear thrust into His rib cage*.

**“He...gave it to them”** || He broke the bread **so that** He could give it to them – just as He was about to be broken on the cross so that He could give His life to them.

**He said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”** || There are two things to note about this phrase. The first is about **communion**; the second is about **culture**. **1.** When it comes to **communion**, there are some religious groups (*like the Roman Catholics*) who hold to a doctrine known as **transubstantiation** which teaches that the communion bread literally becomes the physical body of Christ, and the wine in communion literally becomes the physical body of Christ – because Jesus said, “*This is My body*.” So, why don't we believe that this bread is **actually** His body? Because Jesus often used figurative imagery (metaphors, symbols, analogies) like this to describe who He is and what He had come to do. He said, “*I am the door*” (**John 10:9**); “*I am the true vine*” (**John 15:1**); “*I am the bread of life*” (**John 6:35**). Nobody listening to Him started looking for a doorknob attached to His chest or hinges attached to His side. Nobody was looking for leaves or grapes hanging from His arms; nobody was looking for breadcrumbs in His hair...because they knew He wasn't speaking in literal terms. When Jesus said, “*This is My body*,” it was abundantly clear to His listeners that He was speaking metaphorically. It's a picture. A symbol. Just as this bread is broken so that you may have it, so My body will be broken so that you might have my life.

<sup>1</sup> See: “[The Bread of Life](#)” (**John 6:48–51**) preached at North Center Church on March 5, 2023.

2. The second thing I want to note about this phrase is how it has been appropriated into our **abortion industry** today. We actually hear this phrase a lot in our post-Christian culture: “***This is my body.***” Whenever a woman argues that she should be allowed to take the life of the child in her womb, what is her argument? “***This is my body.***” “***My body, my choice.***” The argument isn’t true, of course, as the baby in her womb is not actually her body. This new life is **inside** of her body (*in the womb which God designed as a safe haven for new life to grow*), but it is not part of her body. The new life in the womb is obviously dependent on the mother for nourishment, but it is not part of the mother’s body. That argument is biologically false. Every baby in the womb has their own DNA which is entirely distinct from their mother and father from the moment of conception. They have their own heartbeat, their own organs, their own genetic traits. They are fearfully and wonderfully made from the moment of conception. Just because the baby is located inside their mother’s body does not give the mother the right to take her baby’s life. It’s not healthcare; it’s murder.

Would it be okay for me to kill a child who is growing up in my house? “***My house, my choice!***” Of course not! That’s an absurd argument. Why? Because a person’s location has nothing to do with determining their worth as a human being! The same is true for the child who is located within their mother’s womb. Size, development, location, and degree of dependency never justify taking the life of another human being.<sup>2</sup>

Now, if you have ever had an abortion or you have ever been complicit in an abortion, there are two things from God’s Word that I would want you to hear this morning: (1) what you did was wrong, and God’s Word calls you to repent; and (2) there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. If you confess your sin, God is faithful and just to forgive you and to cleanse you from all of it – because Jesus already paid the price for that sin on the cross.<sup>3</sup>

Why are we talking about **abortion**? Because the mantra that the abortion industry uses is borrowed (or “stolen” rather) from the Lord’s Table. The body of Jesus is about to be broken, His blood poured out, His life taken as a sacrifice for our sin, and He has the right to give His life in this way because it is His body. “***This is My body.***” The abortion industry uses this same argument, “***My body,***” – not to justify sacrificing their own life – but to justify sacrificing the life of the unborn as the body of their baby is broken and its blood is poured out. ***This pro-abortion mantra is not a coincidence.*** From the very beginning, Satan has been seeking to twist, distort, and destroy God’s good design. What Jesus says, “***My body,***” He is talking about saving life (through sacrifice), but when our culture says, “***My body,***” it’s talking about taking life (through murder). When you hear the world say, “***My body, My choice,***” I want you to think, “***That sentence doesn’t belong to the world. That sentence belongs to Jesus who willingly sacrificed His life – to be broken and poured out – so that I might partake of His life by faith and live with Him for all eternity.***”

“***Then He took the cup***”<sup>4</sup> || As with the bread, Jesus is not grabbing this cup because it serves as a convenient illustration for a point that He wants to make. Once again, He is bringing the disciples into a story that God has been telling since the beginning. Throughout the OT, wine (*not grape juice...!*) was seen as a symbol of divine victory, provision, blessing, joy, and heaven – and it was a regular part of their liturgical worship. Wine was also an important part of ***the Jewish Passover meal*** which was a memorial celebration of what God did in rescuing His people from slavery in Egypt. Throughout this meal, the Jews would eat and drink specific things at specific times which symbolized different parts of their rescue story. As part of the meal, they would drink ***4 cups of wine*** (*not grape juice!*).<sup>5</sup> These ***4 cups*** were taken from the ***4 promises*** that God gave to His people in ***Exodus 6:6–7.***

## 1. The Cup of Sanctification

- “***I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.***”

## 2. The Cup of Deliverance (*Cup of Judgment, Cup of Plagues*)

- “***I will rescue you from their bondage.***”

<sup>2</sup> SLED: Size, level of development, environment, degree of dependency.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 1:9.

<sup>4</sup> See: “[\*\*\*The Cup of Blessing\*\*\*](#)” (*1 Cor 10:16*) preached at North Center on May 7, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Ever since ***the temperance movement*** in the 1800’s, many protestant churches switched from wine to grape juice because of all the negative associations with alcohol. But throughout the vast majority of our history, the Jews used wine for the Passover, and the church used wine for the Lord’s Supper.

### 3. The Cup of Redemption

- “*I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.*”

### 4. The Cup of Praise (*Cup of Completion*)

- “*I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.*”

Most biblical scholars believe that this third cup was the cup Jesus was holding when He instituted the Lord’s Supper. Instead of using this cup to celebrate their redemption from Egypt through the blood of a sacrificial lamb, Jesus uses it to teach about an eternal redemption through His own blood which He would shed for the world. The promise that they are remembering with this cup is the promise that God would “**redeem them with an outstretched arm.**” And as Jesus takes the cup, He is saying that this promise is His. He is the One who will redeem them with outstretched arms.

“**And when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it**” || All of them who were in the room, that is. *Who wasn’t in the room by the time Jesus gave them the cup? Judas. How do you know this, Pastor?* Here in Mark’s Gospel (as with all the others), we read that Jesus broke the bread first. In the Gospel of John, we read that Judas left “immediately” after taking the piece of bread (**John 13:30**). When Paul passes this ordinance along to the church in Corinth, he tells them that Jesus didn’t pass the cup until after the meal was over (**1 Cor 11:25**) – and by that time, Judas was already gone. *Why does this matter?* Because Jesus does not offer this Cup of Redemption to those who reject Him. Only those who are with Jesus will taste the Cup of Redemption. Remember what wine symbolizes: *divine victory, heavenly blessing, supernatural joy...* Christ only offers this to those who are with Him. “*He gave it to them.*”

And He said to them, “**This is My blood of the new covenant**” || “*My body. My blood*” – the purchase price of the new covenant. The Bible tells us that “**without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin**” (**Heb 9:22**).<sup>6</sup> The OT was always anticipating a day when God would make a new covenant with His people. The Redeemer would come to His people,<sup>7</sup> and He would give them new hearts.<sup>8</sup> He would put His Spirit within us. He would write His laws on our hearts and cause us to walk in His ways. He would forgive our sin and wipe it out of the record for good.<sup>9</sup> It would be an everlasting covenant of peace because His presence would abide with us forever.<sup>10</sup> The old covenant required the sacrificial blood of bulls & goats & sheep & doves in order for God to pass over their sins, but it was only a temporary covenant because the blood of animals could never atone for the sin of humans;<sup>11</sup> but this new covenant would be forever because it would be purchased by the precious blood of God Himself.<sup>12</sup> **“God Himself has paid the price.”** He shed His blood “**for many**” so that all who trust in Him today will find everlasting life in His sacrifice.

“**Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God**” || The 4<sup>th</sup> Cup in this feast was the “*Cup of Praise*” or the “*Cup of Completion*” celebrating the promise that God will take us as His people and that He will be our God forever. This is the cup that concluded the Passover meal because the story of their rescue from Egypt was complete. Yet, the story of their rescue from sin was not yet complete. So, this moment was not the time to celebrate the Cup of Completion. This moment was about Redemption. The Cup of Completion would wait until “**that day**” when He would “**drink it new in the kingdom of God.**” That day is coming! “*Oh what a day of rejoicing that will be!*” But this day, this moment, is about redemption.

“**And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives**” || I could preach on this verse for hours! Earlier this year, I finished writing an entire book about this verse (*or at least about the theme of this verse*), which highlights how important congregational singing is to God. The last thing that Jesus does with all of His

<sup>6</sup> See also: Lev 17:11; cf. Heb 10:12. As Christ shed His blood on the cross, He was the Passover Lamb of God (Exod 12), the offering for sin (Lev 4), the means of atonement (Lev 16).

<sup>7</sup> Isa 59:20–21.

<sup>8</sup> Ezek 36:25–27.

<sup>9</sup> Jer 31:31–34

<sup>10</sup> Ezek 37:24–28; Isa 54:10; Jer 32:38–41.

<sup>11</sup> Rom 3:25–26; Heb 10:4.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 20:28.

disciples before He goes to the cross is to sing with them. The act of congregational singing is so precious and important to God. As God was creating the world, the Bible tells us that the earth was surrounded in congregational singing.<sup>13</sup> The first thing God's people did after He rescued them from slavery in Egypt was to sing of their salvation and of the death of their enemy. And the last thing Jesus does with His people before He goes to the cross to rescue them from their sin and to make them a new creation is to sing with them.

## CLOSE

And so, this is why we conclude our Gathering on the Lord's Day the way that we do. **1.** We come to table together. We warn you not to partake of the bread and the cup if you have not yet surrendered your life to King Jesus, trusting in Him alone for the forgiveness of your sins – because He only offers this table to those who are with Him. **2.** And then we partake of the bread, remembering His body that was broken for us, and we drink of the cup, remembering His blood that was shed for us. **3.** And then we join our hearts and voices by singing together.

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<sup>13</sup> Job 38:7.