

ANAHEIM COMMUNITY CONNECTION (ACC) for December 6, 2020

Our focus for worship today is: *Blood of the Covenant*

I. **OPENING PRAYER:** Pray that we receive the grace of Christ, worship by grace in Christ, live in grace through Christ & proclaim grace for Christ

II. **COMMUNITY CONNECTION:**

Share how the grace of the cross changes everything for you in your everyday life.

III. **CHRIST CONNECTION: MATTHEW 26:20-30**

A. HIS LORDSHIP WAS BETRAYED BY US

²⁰ Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. ²¹ As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." ²² Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?" ²³ And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me." ²⁴ "The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." ²⁵ And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself."

As they were eating. This meal they were partaking was in celebration of the Passover – a commemoration of God’s salvation of His people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt with His providence and power. As recounted in Exodus 12, the Passover is a reminder of how the Lord passed over the households of Israel whose doorposts were covered by the blood of a lamb, sparing them from the judgment of God. Yet, the Passover was only an illustration pointing to the ultimate and final fulfillment of God’s perfect redemption of all sinners through the Lamb of God – His Son Jesus Christ. All sinners who are covered by His blood will be spared from God’s righteous judgment against sin.

"One of you will betray me." For the modern reader, we may overlook how shocking and unsettling this statement was for the disciples. The Passover meal was a time of celebration and joy between friends and loved ones. Betrayal of a friend at the Passover would be an inconceivable act of treachery – eating with a smile while stabbing in the back. To declare this truth in the midst of the festivities was jarring to the hearts of the disciples. Yet, His words pierced them to the core causing them to question their own loyalty to Christ. They didn’t declare "It is not I" but rather queried whether it was them or not. Christ answers them vaguely by identifying the betrayer as one "who dipped with Me in the bowl"; for they had all dipped and shared in the meal with Christ. They all could be the betrayer for they knew their own hearts.

"Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Judas addresses Jesus not as Lord (as the other disciples) but Rabbi indicating his view of Christ. He had heard all the teachings, seen the miracles, participated in the work, yet Judas’ heart was unchanged and unmoved. He saw but did not receive. While it was in the Sovereign plan of God for Christ to be betrayed, Judas was still responsible for his wicked act against the Lord. It was Judas’ choice to turn against the Lord and reject the cross of Christ. It was of his own volition and not coerced or compelled. Despite knowing Judas will betray Him, Jesus still offers His body and His blood to Judas in the following verses. Even in the betrayal, Jesus is extending grace again and again. Sadly, while Judas externally and physically took the bread and cup – his heart rejected Christ’s final offer in grace.

- If Jesus were to interrupt your family or church mealtime with the declaration, "One of you has betrayed me," how would you react? Would you be deeply grieved or deeply offended? Would you say "Surely not I" or "It is surely me" in front of everyone? In what ways have you betrayed Him?
- How is Judas’ response to Jesus a warning for us? How is Jesus’ response to Judas show about Christ’s heart?
- Is Jesus your Lord or is He your Rabbi? What is the difference for you?

B. HIS BODY WAS FREELY GIVEN FOR US

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

"...this is My body." Under the Jewish tradition, the Passover meal would consist of unleavened bread that would be passed and dipped in various sauces. There is often an explanation of the meaning of the unleavened bread (Exod 13:7-10) as a reminder of God’s mighty deliverance from slavery. Jesus interrupts this practice and declares that the bread is His body. He is the Bread of Life. His sinless and righteous body is the means of God’s powerful salvation from the bondage of sin and death. It is in His sinless body that the wrath of God was poured out. It is in His sinless body that died the sinner’s death. The death in His body gives us life. By His wounds we are healed.

"Take, eat..." His body was given freely. No one took it from Christ. He offers it up of His own free and sovereign will. While His body is given by Christ, it is to be received by us. We are to take it. Each one must take it for themselves. Not just take it, but to consume it. We are to eat of His body as declared in John 6 – joining in communion and fellowship in dying to sin by His death and rising to life by His resurrected body. By this act, we are also reminded that we have died to sin and are now alive in Christ. The old is gone and the new has come in Christ.

- Knowing Christ’s sinless body was offered in our place, what does it mean to "take and eat" of Christ’s body? Why isn’t it enough just to take and "not eat" as seen in the life of Judas?
- In what ways have you seen death to the power of sin in your life? What ways have you seen evidence of regeneration or new life in Christ?

C. HIS BLOOD IS A COVENANT OF GRACE FOR US

²⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

"...for this is My blood of the covenant..." It is important to note Christ's qualification of His blood as "My blood of the covenant." A covenant is a binding contract or promise between two parties. As a sign of their pledge, they would cut their choice animals in two pieces, separating one half from the other. They both would walk between the two bloody halves of the animals with the understanding that this would happen to them if they broke their agreement. This bloody covenant is a reference to the Abrahamic Covenant, found in Genesis 15. At the time of God's covenant with Abraham, God puts him to sleep and God alone walked through the two pieces (Gen 15:17) as the sole guarantor of the Covenant. As an act of grace, the fulfillment of the Covenant would not depend on Abraham, but only on God. Therefore, it is guaranteed to be carried out. In the same way, Jesus is referring to the same grace of God by declaring the "blood of the covenant." This New Covenant would be fulfilled completely by the blood of Christ. It is poured out for our forgiveness and to reconciling us to Himself. There is no contribution from us, for He has done it all on the Cross. It is all His work and none our work. All that is required is for us to receive it for ourselves. The term is also seen in Exodus 24:8 when Moses covered the people in the blood of the sacrificial lamb to pledge their obedience to the fulfillment of God's Word. The perfect fulfillment of God's Law would be seen in His perfect life and sealed by the shedding of His blood on the Cross.

"Drink from it, all of you...poured out for many." Although Christ's offer of His blood covering is for all, not all will receive. Not all will receive forgiveness for some will reject the gift. As in the case of Judas, it was offered to him. He may have drunk it in unison with the other disciples at the time. Yet Judas did not receive it for himself but simply played the part externally with no internal acceptance. May we drink in the work of Christ on our behalf. May we hide under His blood completely and eternally.

- Knowing Christ fulfilled all the terms of the Covenant (with no contribution from us), how do you respond to such grace? How does it impact the way you approach Him daily in His word, weekly in worship, your eagerness to gather in community or your fervor to proclaim it?
- The offer of His blood is for "all of you" but only some receive and accept it. Why is difficult for some to receive the Christ's offer of His saving blood?
- If your friend asked you "Why do I need the blood of Jesus?" what would you say?

D. HIS RETURN IS A GUARANTEED CELEBRATION WITH US

²⁹ "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." ³⁰ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

"...until that day when I drink it new with you..." Jesus ends with a promise that will give the disciples assurance. For shortly after the Passover meal, these same disciples will scatter and abandon their beloved Christ when He is arrested. Some running away fearfully. One denying Him fiercely. The opening words of Jesus and His betrayal likely echoed in their ears that night: One of you will betray me. Jesus, knowing their upcoming failures, promises that the remaining eleven will not ultimately fail. In saying "with you in My Father's kingdom" indicates that He is guaranteeing that they will endure to the end. Christ is looking forward to a celebrate the eternal victory with them in Heaven. His blood would cover all their failures and, even more, transform them into the persevering heralds we see in the book of Acts. What an assurance of Christ's promise for all those who receive His body and His blood! It is fitting that they would end the meal with a hymn of praise – traditionally the "Hallel" Psalms of 113-118. May we echo the hymn that could have been sung that night in Psalm 116:7: "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes our God is compassionate. The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low and He saved me. Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you."

- How does Christ's promise help you endure the trials you face in this life?
- How will the celebration of Christ in heaven compare to sufferings for Christ on earth? How are you living in anticipation of His return?

ROMANS 8:28-39

God works all things together to carry out His great and good purposes. This is most evident at the cross. The evil intended by the world was used by our good God to work as the means of salvation for all who rebelled against Him.

- Think about the phrase "all things." What are some of the "things" that you are facing that God is working for good in your life and in the world?

IV. CARE CONNECTION:

Spend time praying for:

- Celebrate His overwhelming grace in trusting the goodness of God to use our works for His glory
- Unity in the church
- All affected by COVID virus & illnesses
- Care needs / concerns
- Unbelieving friends & family