

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED  
**Matthew 26:1-2, 17-19**  
**SPARED BY THE PASSOVER LAMB**

*Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."*

*Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And He said, Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples." So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.*

Is there any special significance when a baby is born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July? Or if someone dies on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July? Not exactly. What about in our text? What was going on, in Jerusalem at the time when Jesus was about to suffer and die? Is there any significance to it? Answer: the combined festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread—usually identified by one name or the other—were about to begin. There was much significance to the fact that Jesus died at this time.

Passover, which was celebrated once a year, carried much patriotic spirit with it. It was much like our 4<sup>th</sup> of July. On the day—shall we say, night—of the very first Passover, the Israelite people “won,” or were granted, their freedom from slavery in Egypt. The people left Egypt and traveled as a new nation onward to the land of Canaan. There the Lord would establish them as a blessed people, land, and country.

But Passover ran much deeper than just a patriotic holiday. It was a spiritual holiday—whether the people always understood that or not. It was significant that Jesus suffered and died during that festival.

The first Passover was the culmination of God's dealings with stubborn Pharaoh. God had used “shock and awe,” if you will, to wake Pharaoh from his proud slumber of independence and self-delusion that he called the shots. God wanted Pharaoh to let His people go. Blood, frogs, flies, gnats, sickness, hail, grasshoppers, darkness-that-could-be-felt, to name several of the first 9 plagues. But Pharaoh would not budge. God switched His approach. On the night of the 10<sup>th</sup> plague, God came with stealth and silence when the “Destroyer” passed through the land. The Lord took the lives of all the first born sons. Pharaoh and Egypt were broken. They cried out in distress, and Pharaoh allowed Israel to go.

In the meantime, God dealt openly and mercifully with Israel, the oppressed slaves of Egypt. He told them what was about to happen. He instructed them to heed His Words in order to remain safe, secure, and about-to-be-freed. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month, they were to select an unblemished, year-old, male lamb for each house and set it aside. On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month they were to slaughter the lamb, put the blood on the sides and top of the door frame. The blood of the lamb on their door frame would signify to the silent Destroyer that these were God's people, who trusted His Word for them. The Lord would not strike their homes with death to the first born son. The people were also to roast the lamb over fire, eat it inside the security and privacy of their homes, with bitter herbs and with unleavened bread (bread without yeast) so they wouldn't have to wait for the bread to rise. They were to have their traveling clothes on, ready to set out when broken Pharaoh would give the word.

It was the day the Lord would exclude them from His wrath and not strike them with grief and death. The Passover lamb whose blood was on their doorframes and whose meat would nourish them for the journey that night, would be their merciful gift from God. They were His special people. For them to despise the lamb and the meal, would bring death and helpless sadness to their homes.

In our text, Jesus was finished dealing with the stubborn Jews of Jerusalem. No more would He teach and seek to lead them to the Father. They were stubborn and would not submit in repentance to seek God's healing for their sin. It was time for the Lord to rescue from their clutches those who trusted in Him. It was time for death of that Lamb who would spare God's people, bringing forgiveness and righteousness, who would grant them freedom from oppression and slavery to the devil, and who would give them their freedom to enter the peace and joy of God's presence forever in the Promised Land of heaven.

The word “Passover” isn’t just talking about God “passing overhead,” as a low-flying airplane might fly over you, or pass over you—a thrill to see, but that’s about it. The word “Passover” at root carries the meaning “to spare.” As a warden who assigns men to work detail, but for some reason “spares”—“passes over”—certain ones or you. Really, Passover Festival was the festival of “sparing.” God spared His people in Egypt. Do you see the significance? Jesus came to spare us. He would be our Passover Lamb, slaughtered for us, through whom we do not face slavery to Satan and sin, but freedom in Christ. We do not face death and grief, but life and joy!

In our text Jesus calls Himself the “Son of Man.” He was indeed true man. He was true God and true man in one person. There’s more: Jesus was THE ‘son of man,’ the promised seed of Adam and Eve who would crush the Serpent’s power over us. Jesus was THE ONE representative of the entire human race who could and would take the penalty and punishment for the sins of the world as He died under God’s hand on the cross. Although no Passover “lamb of sparing” died mercilessly on a stake, or a cross, left to hang there until dead, Jesus your Passover Lamb did, in love for you.

The text says He was “delivered up,” was “handed over.” In fact, He let them do it. He went willingly to be the one in whom we are spared, or passed over, and set free. Jesus did not fight back. When they came looking for Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said, “I am He.” He told Peter to put away his sword, for He could have called on 12 legions of angels to rescue Him. He could have gotten off the cross anytime, as the enemies taunted in disbelief. But He didn’t. He willingly surrendered to His Father’s will for your benefit and mine.

But there’s more. Passover was also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Every year when Passover was celebrated, the bread to be eaten had no yeast. There is significance that does not meet the eye. In the Bible it is very clear, that yeast, leaven, is a picture of sin. It spreads quietly and surely through a batch of dough. It has a visible effect that changes the shape of the dough. Sin is like that with us. It spreads quietly and surely through each of our hearts and lives infecting everything we think, say, do. And it spreads quietly and surely through the entire human race. But Jesus is the “unleavened” bread without sin. He, the lamb who was offered for us was “sinless,” the holy Son of God, and a holy human being, our flesh and blood brother yet without sin. In perfect righteousness He gave Himself for us. In Him we have holiness and righteousness. In Holy Communion we truly share in this unleavened bread—not just the bread of wheat flour and water, but the Bread of His body. “Take eat, this is My body, given into death for you.” By the miracle and power of His Word, His body is truly present and given to us. In Him, we too are pure and holy, acceptable to our Father, spared by Him. Unleavened! Paul says in I Corinthians 5:7-8 *Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump [of dough], since you truly are un-leavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

This Lenten season, just as those disciples did, prepare for Jesus the Passover Lamb of Sparing and the Unleavened Bread of Righteousness. Every day, and all year long, see how Jesus is the One in whom you are spared. Make preparations, not just at Lent for Easter, but all life long for your exit from the slavery in sin of this life to the Promised Land of heaven. Prepare other disciples of Jesus around you. In the quiet security of your homes and at worship be fed on Jesus the Word. At worship share in the special gift of the Lord’s Supper instituted at Jesus’s Last Supper with His disciples. The Savior shares with you the guarantee and the assurance of your freedom and citizenship in heaven through His rescue. He truly gives to you His body and His blood in a real, but miraculous way. He is your Bread of Life now and forever. He nourishes you for the road ahead. He grants you the purity and holiness without the yeast of sin. You are forgiven and on the road to the Promised Land of heaven.

Is there any special significance to this His suffering and death at the Passover time and the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Yes, in the sinless His death and resurrection you are PASSED-OVER, SPARED, declared sinless and UNLEAVENED! Thank the Lord for the Passover Lamb!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---