

Proper 18 (A); 13 Pentecost
7 September 2014
Exodus 12: 1-124
Sacred Meals; Holy Work
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- ✘ When we think of our Sunday worship, it's easy to focus on the things we do:
 - ✓ Sing a few songs, listen to three readings from the Bible, hearing a sermon, saying a few prayers, eat & drink the bread and wine, receive a blessing, go to coffee hour.
 - ✓ That's what we **do**...but worship helps us define who we **are**.
 - In our worship ceremony we re-enter into the stories and re-create the memories that make us who we are.
 - We take part in the shared stories
 - We take part in a set of memories that have been held by the People of the Book over the centuries
 - We become part of the people who have lived by that memory for generations.
- ✘ Today's first reading from Exodus is about the Passover
 - ✓ And it speaks to the original event
 - and it speaks to the model it became for Passover celebrations from that time forward
 - And it also helps to define who we are as we commemorate that event
- ✘ According to the story of the Passover, in order to be saved,
 - ✓ there has to be a certain kind of food (roasted lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread)
 - ✓ there has to be a certain kind of blood (from a lamb sacrificed from the feast).
 - ✓ There are specific directions for the food and for how the meal is to be eaten (in a hurry, while standing, staff in hand and sandals on feet; ready to leave at a moment's notice).

- ✓ All these specifics anchor the story in a particular time and place that give it a meaning both in the context of the story and in a larger context as well
 - First, eating the food while, at the same time, being ready to depart reminded the Hebrews and us that we should never get too comfortable and at home in an empire that is characterized by oppression and abuse.
 - Second, the marking with blood enacts a sense of being protected from the midnight violence that loosed in the empire.
 - This is an act that allows us to acknowledge that we are cared for in a world that is under profound threat.
- ✗ The angel of death “passed over” the houses marked by the blood
 - ✓ The blood of the lamb had become a symbol that marked those who were protected by God from the death that passed through Egypt.
 - This also explains why early Jewish Christians, who were steeped in the memory of the Passover, would speak of the saving power of Jesus as “the blood of the lamb.”
- ✗ The Passover was, and is, the central celebration of the Hebrew faith
 - ✓ And it gives us the basic outlines of our own central celebrations of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and Easter.
 - ✓ Many believe that Jesus and his disciples shared the Passover as their final meal together (along with certain reinterpretations by Jesus).
 - Anytime we participate in the Eucharist, we recall the Passover.
 - The Passover, and the Eucharist, remind us that we are children of the marked door posts, and we are marked for safety in the midst of chaos and death and cries in the night.
 - ◆ The Passover reminds us that we are children of this hurried meal,
 - ✦ Getting ready to depart the empire and are destined for freedom outside the boundaries of empire.
- ✗ But why do we, Christians and Jews, use a meal to mark the central celebrations of our faiths?

- ✓ Why do we focus on the meaning of the Lamb and the blood, the bread and the wine?
 - “Do this in memory of me,” Jesus commanded his disciples.
 - Why do this—eat a meal—in memory of the Passover and the Last Supper?
- ✓ Perhaps its because that just in the fact of our need for food we confess that we are dependent on others and on God for our lives.
 - In a way, we are confessing to everyone gathered here our weakness and our dependence.
 - We confess our need for food to survive,
 - our need of God to sustain us,
 - of others to share
 - And of our need to share with others.
- ✗ This communion ideal—the willingness to share with others— is hard to hold onto.
 - ✓ And that’s not hard to understand.
 - We are often in competition with each other, and we are guided by our fears.
 - We ask questions like, “who is my neighbor?” and “Do I even want to know my neighbor?” or “Why doesn’t my neighbor want to stay on his side of the property line, or his side of the city, or his line of the border?”
- ✗ I know that for myself, oftentimes, I’m guided not so much by fear as I am drawn into my own self-serving fantasy world
 - ✓ It’s a world of what I might think of as the New Apartheid,
 - One in which the separation is not between people of a different color but between those of us who live in our own comforts and are secure in the knowledge that “is what it is.”
 - “It is what it is” would include such things that I used to think of as “victimless crimes.”
 - ✓ In Bayside Inn, paying bill for client. Anna Marie (manager) Leonard Johnson (owner) talking about how some of the refinery temp-workers;

Park trucks at Sebos and walk to the Oriental Massage parlor next to Liberty Tax and Coffee Stand. Not certified massage therapist. Leonard: backpage.com. "new girls weekly." Victimless crime. Thank God for the Soroptimist ladies and those who have been involved in the anti-trafficking work in Anacortes. Anything but victimless. Emily Schuh, Soroptimist and Chief Bowers and elsewhere around city hall. Informed the owner

- ✘ All this reminds us that even though the Jewish Passover delivered God's people from slavery, both Jews and Christians believe that the work is not yet done
 - ✓ Our work with God is to deliver the oppressed,
 - to act on behalf of those suffering in exile or in servitude
 - or those who have been captured by traffickers.
 - ✓ So the Passover meal and the Passover story commemorate not just what God did, but what God is doing yet in the world, and the means by which we can take part in God actions in the world.
- ✘ Whatever happened during the evening as the Angel of Death moved among the Egyptians, we don't know and don't fully understand.
 - ✓ But what turned everything around is the fact that the power and brutality of the Egyptian empire was defeated by an even greater power in this unexpected event.
 - ✓ From this, 4000 years of Hebrew (and Christian) generations have recalled and experienced God's victory over evil.
 - ✓ It gave the Hebrews hope and it give us the assurance that there is something, someone, bigger out there making sure our hope is not empty.