

Fed By Grace | Food in the Gospels

“The Last Supper”

Luke 22.7-20

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Over the past ten weeks or so, we’ve been looking at an unusual theme, i.e. food in the four Gospels, food as a symbol (IN the teaching of Jesus Christ) *and food as an event* (social gatherings and food events were teachable moments where Jesus Christ did some of His most significant teaching).

This is the moment (in the Gospels) that most brings those two aspects of the theme together – it’s *both* a very significant *event* (a food event, a social gathering) AND food is used as a teaching device, a metaphor AT this event, the Last Supper.

Tonight, WE find ourselves at a social gathering, a food event and are also *given* a spiritual metaphor or symbol to receive or take away AND if we receive it all AS it was intended to be received, *it will change us* ...We can walk OUT as different people. So let’s look at the Last Supper; IN *IT*: 1) The Senseless Becomes Sensible 2) The Goal Comes Into View and 3) The Good News Becomes Digestible and Beneficial

We call this tragic day Good Friday...and that always puzzles some people... *This is the day that the only innocent and perfectly loving human being who ever lived* was falsely arrested and tried and brutally tortured and covered in shame and spit, He was hung to death as a spectacle...Good Friday.

And Jesus Christ was very aware that His disciples would not think of this as a Good Friday. In fact THEY would find this death...not GOOD but absurd and senseless and probably conclude from it that Jesus of Nazareth was NOT the Messiah after all and might even conclude (from this whole travesty) that there is no God and that everything is meaningless.

So, Jesus Christ warned them. In fact, over and over again He tells them, “You’re right! I am the Messiah and ...I AM GOING TO JERUSALEM TO DIE!”

And every time they hear that they conclude that He must be using some sort of riddle. Because if there’s one thing that every little Jewish boy or girl knows is that the Messiah is a Hero, is a Savior, is a Conqueror – a LION and NOT a Lamb!

So, when Jesus Christ spoke of dying it’d be like hearing, “Go stand in the corner of that CIRCLE... of go buy some dehydrated water...or stop by my house and pick up my football bat...” That’s all non-sense! And when they saw Him die on that Bad Friday...it would obliterate their faith and leave them wrecked and despairing in a senseless universe.

So, right before the Crisis, He prepares a meal. He has done the preliminary legwork. He had everything put together...and says, "I have LUSTED to eat this meal with you..." (v.15) a very strong word for desire. And in the mean, the senseless death will make sense – will become sensible. Everything in the meal SPEAKS...The wheat can only convey life if it is first crushed and made into bread. So, I can only give you life if I am crushed. I haven't come to teach you how to live (like all religious teachers teach, "Do this and you'll be blessed, be enlightened, be saved and go to heaven...") I haven't come to TEACH life but to CONVEY life...and just like wheat must die if it's to pass on life...so too, I MUST DIE."

And grapes...You can't just rub the fruit on your skin as it continues to live on the vine! No! The grape has to be crushed! That's the only way it can become good and satisfying to the thirsty...IT HAS TO DIE IF IT'S GOING TO TRANSFER LIFE. In the same way, I cannot help you unless I die!"

If our real problem was the bad guys then the Messiah could just defeat them...if our real problem was just ignorance then the Messiah could just educate or give us an example to follow... BUT OUR REAL PROBLEM IS GUILT. We are separated from God because of us! Because of our sin and sinfulness we are at odds with heaven.

And Jesus is saying, "What makes this Friday, GOOD Friday...is that on this day, I am being charged with your offences and I am getting what YOU deserve. This is My reason for coming...as a kernel of wheat is born to be crushed...as a grape is grown in order to die – to bleed and be drained – SO I AM COME TO DIE AND CAN ONLY BENEFIT YOU IF I DO... (The Last Supper makes sense of the senseless!)

And, secondly, while Jesus had evidently done the advanced preparations for this meal... whether He rented the room and purchased the food a few weeks prior or months (I don't know) but the preparation had actually started not months or years ago...but centuries ago!

This is the Passover Meal... it had been celebrated *yearly* for 1500 years...It started when the blood of a spotless lamb was applied to the doorway of believing families who were hostages in Egypt. *The messenger of death "passed over" those homes and they were spared.* And Jesus Christ is saying, "All those Passover meals from the very start til now were pointing to THIS moment...those meals were pointers...they were signs...BUT THIS IS THE GOAL!"

In Exodus 24, when the Israelites had been liberated from slavery...They were in the desert and ...the elders are to sacrifice animals and sprinkle "the blood of the Covenant" on the people. It was a pointer, a vivid reminder, "you deserve death but another will die in your place". Then, God calls the elders of Israel up on to a mountain and they are given a vision of God... and they know they are going to turn to ashes...right there...they see the holiness of God and they see their own guilt and flaws...and they know they will die...But instead it reads, "*Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank.*"

God was saying, "I have removed your guilt – your un-holiness... because I have charged your offences to a spotless Lamb...and I brought you here to eat and drink with you...because I love you...this is why I made YOU...so I could give Myself to YOU...so I could celebrate My love at a meal!"

It comes up many more times in the OT – the goal is for God... through His own sacrificial love, through the Blood of the Covenant – to be in intimate fellowship with His people, TO EAT AND DRINK WITH HIS PEOPLE!

And at this Last Supper, Jesus Christ is making that goal...the purpose of everything ...HE is making that goal VISIBLE! "See, this is God, eating with His people...they are not destroyed as they deserve... because the Blood of the Covenant has taken away their guilt..."

"I have LUSTED to eat this meal with you", says Jesus Christ... He is saying, "THIS IS GOD'S GREAT GOAL...God eating and drinking with His redeemed, forgiven, beloved people." (Maybe this whole theme of "food" wasn't so strange after all!)

Finally, in this Last Supper, (1) the senseless becomes sensible, (2) the goal comes into view and (third) the Good News becomes beneficial and digestible.

This meal becomes what sustains us because every bite reminds us that we cannot save ourselves but the death of Jesus Christ is sufficient... The Blood of the Covenant was spilled, finally on that Good Friday... and I am now believing it...receiving the words, "It is finished!"

I live on that truth. It sustains me. Colossians 3 puts it this way,

"When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry."

All the vain things that charm me most...what I used to look to for nourishment ...these are losing their power to fill me up... "Christ who is our life..." He is my life...MY STATUS...my shalom...My joy... my glory and applause...my well being and holiness. At this meal the Good News is digested. Let's pray and eat!