

Exodus 12:1-14
“Our Memorial Day”
Maundy (Holy) Thursday

April 2, 2026
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.
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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast”
(Exodus 12:14).

Just sit back and imagine for a moment what it was like that night. Imagine the faces of the lambs that would shed their blood to provide a safe haven for their owners. Imagine what it was like preparing lambs to be roasted over the fire and eaten. What would you see?

You would see the innocence of an animal looking back at you. That sheep would have no idea about what would soon take place.

And yet, these sheep did their job. They played their role to point to something else, something bigger than what happened in Egypt that night when the angel of death swept through the land and took the lives of any firstborn not found huddled under the blood of lambs.

Centuries later, imagine looking into the face of One who knows He would be slaughtered. Imagine looking into the face of the very Lamb of God who would sacrifice Himself to take away the sin of the world. This Lamb of God would shed His blood to provide eternal life for the repentant sinner. Look into the face of the Lamb of God and what do you see? You see the face of One who knows. You see the face of One who wills. You see not the face of an ignorant, non-consenting animal, but of a fully cooperative human sacrifice. You see the face of a Man who said: ***“No one takes [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father”*** (John 10:18). You hear the voice of this Man saying: ***“Now is judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself”*** (John 12:31-32).

Today is the day that shall be remembered forever. God says today ***“shall be for you a memorial day”*** (Exodus 12:14). So, what are we to remember? What are we to memorial?

First, let's look at what our reading from Exodus points to.

As we look at the directions God gave for preparing the Passover meal, we see step-by-step how the entire ritual points to Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb:

- The *Passover lamb* was to be a year-old male, chosen from the sheep or the goats. – John the Baptist, when calling attention to the promised Messiah whose way he was to prepare, pointed to Jesus and said, ***“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*** (John 1:29). When writing to the Corinthians, Paul declared, ***“Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed”*** (1 Corinthians 5:7).
- God directed that this Passover lamb was to be *“without defect.”* – Peter wrote to the scattered Christians of Asia Minor that they were redeemed ***“with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot”*** (1 Peter 1:19).
- The Passover lamb was to be slaughtered as a *sacrifice*. – Paul reminded his fellow believers in Ephesians 5 that ***“Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”*** (Ephesians 5:2). The writer of the book of Hebrews repeatedly refers to Christ as an “offering” and a “sacrifice.”
- The Israelites were to ***“take some of the blood and put it on two doorposts and the lintel of the houses”*** (Exodus 12:7). On the night of the Passover feast, when He would pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn, God had promised the Israelites, ***“When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt”*** (Exodus 12:13b). Israel, in other words, was saved from destruction by the blood of the Passover lamb. – St. Peter points this act to the central teaching of Scripture that we are redeemed from the power of sin, death, and Satan ***“with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot”*** (1 Peter 1:19)
- Later on in Exodus 12, the Lord directed Moses and Aaron concerning the Passover lamb, ***“You shall not break any of its bones”*** (Exodus 12:46). – After Jesus’ death on the cross, the soldiers did not break His bones as they did to those others who were crucified with Him. John writes, ***“These things happened so that Scripture would be fulfilled: ‘Not one of His bones will be broken’”*** (John 19:36).

In these ways, we can see how the Passover lamb pointed to Jesus, the very Lamb of God, who gave His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

It was this memorial day that was to be remembered, so the Israelites would see the fulfillment of that Passover with the coming of the Messiah.

Now, let us imagine what the disciples in the Upper Room were thinking this night nearly two thousand years ago. Here they are, about to celebrate the memorial day. That night type meets antitype. All that lamb meant for Israel and more, Jesus had come to be for all people. Roasted it was. Roasted He would be. But even more.

Unlike those previous Passover lambs, Jesus would die not just for a select few, but for the entire world. His sacrifice alone had the strength to turn away eternal death. His Body would be given as the food, so that the faithful might partake and be ready to move out of this sinful world and into their true fatherland, the promised land of heaven, and the new heaven and new earth. His body and His blood is the only way out of condemnation.

Look into the face of the Lamb of God and what do you hear Him say? He says: *“I know what I am doing, and what I am doing I do for love for you and love for all, that whoever will believe this great love will be delivered from the angel of death forever!”*

From this Upper Room, picture meets reality.

Tonight, we gather as Christians redeemed by this Lamb of God who is without blemish or spot. Tonight, we also celebrate and remember the institution of His memorial. And His memorial took up the Passover and went even further. His memorial took up the manna and went even further. For His memorial is known as the Eucharist, the Thanksgiving, the Sacrament of the Altar.

Today is also a memorial day. So, what are we to remember about the institution of the Lord’s Supper?

First, St. Paul instructs us in 1 Corinthians 11 to ***“examine [ourselves], then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on [themselves]”*** (1 Corinthians 11:28-29).

So, we examine what we hear and what we believe. For as Luther says, a *“person is truly and worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins’”*

We remember the Christ shed His blood for us and died for us. We remember that simple bread and wine is not just food and drink, but the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ truly present under bread and wine as He is given and shed for the forgiveness of our sins and for the strength of our faith.

But there is also even more happening in the Lord’s Supper. We also believe that the Lord’s Supper expresses unity in belief. We believe that before Christians commune together that we should resolve our differences. This means confessing our sins when we have done wrong and forgiving each other just as Christ has forgiven us. This also means resolving differences in what God’s Word says, because to be united in Christ is to be united in what His Word teaches. Agreeing on what the Lord Jesus says is Christian unity. Agreeing on a common confession of faith is Christian unity.

The first Passover incorporated the eating of lamb, real lamb. Blood, real blood. On this Maundy Thursday, Christ gives us His real body and His real blood, so that we may eat, and death may pass over. As we gather at the altar this evening, we come to His Table in amazement as we receive His sacrifice in the most intimate way, a true communion! So let us also always examine ourselves, resolve our differences, and unite in true Christian unity, as Christ gives us the Passover of your sins through His Body and Blood given and shed for you!

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world,
have mercy upon us.

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world,
have mercy upon us.

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world,
grant us Thy peace. Amen. (*Agnus Dei, Divine Service, Setting Three*)

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +