

The Old Upper Room Table
The Gospel of Mark 11-16: #9
Mark 14:17-31

As often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, now you are to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes in the future.

There is one morning announcement we've never made in the 8 years of our existence. But it's the one announcement that I long to hear more than any other. And I fully expect to when — not if — the Lord provides for us the much-needed facility of his choosing. That one announcement is this: "Brothers and Sisters, I'm proud to announce for the first time in our history that immediately following today's service, there will be a Dinner on the Ground." Oh, how I long for that announcement. For few things in life are sweeter than the tea around church fellowship tables. And even fewer are sweeter than the fellowship that comes from the body of Christ gathered around tables as an expression of their love for God and each other.

If you do an inventory of some of the greatest lessons you've ever learned in life, one or two of them happened around the dinner table. If you do an inventory of the Word of God, you will also learn that some of the greatest lessons for the People of God came at the fellowship table. It was at the fellowship table that the widow of Zarephath learned from Elijah that God was in the business of giving her flour and oil that would never run out. It was at the fellowship table that Mephibosheth found out that David's tablecloth covered his crippled legs. It was at the fellowship table that the Children of Israel learned that the blood of the Passover lamb was the only sufficient substance on this earth suitable for salvation. It was at the fellowship table that Matthew learned that Jesus liked to dine with tax collectors on occasion. And it was at the fellowship table that Mary and Martha learned that the impulse to pour an expensive jar of perfume and pour it on Jesus' feet was the right thing to do.

But friends, I want to tell you today, that while I long for the first of many Dinner on the Grounds at the Genesis Church of Vero Beach, the greatest Dinner on the Grounds that Jesus longed for with His disciples was His last one. The menu wasn't Swamp Cabbage and Sweet Tea either. It was the new bread and the new wine of the New Covenant. Today, because of the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus, we get a chance to come to the table just like the disciple's did the night before his death. But that's not all. We also get to learn some of the greatest lessons our Lord had for the disciples there at that Old Upper Room table that's preserved for us in the Gospel of Mark. That Old Upper Room table has been set. The disciples are already seated. Jesus is too. We pull up our chairs to that table of abounding lessons in Mark 14:17-31.

17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." 19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?" 20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 21 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." 22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. 25 "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." 26 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." 28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." 29 Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." 30 "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." 31 But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

At That Old Upper Room Table, You Find Lessons About:

1. Where We Fail Quite Often (18)

- **Mrs. Roof, the Librarian:** (1) Mrs. Roof was the head librarian of Boiling Springs Middle School; (2) Mrs. Roof had two very important rules for middle schoolers entering her most holy place: (a) Do not chew gum in Mrs. Roof's library. (b) Do not talk in Mrs. Roof's library. (3) Unfortunately, these were these comments from Mrs. Roof on Derrick's report card: (a) "Derrick chews gum in the library quite often." (b) "Derrick talks in the library quite often." (4) Translation: Derrick often misreads the significance of the occasion.
- **The Lesson:** We think we know the plans of God. And we are often quite wrong. Consequently, we misread the significance of the occasion.
- **Reclining at the Table vs Truly I Tell You:** (1) In verse 18, Mark says "they," meaning the disciples were "reclining at the table" eating. Jesus, however, wasn't eating. Instead, he was speaking: "truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." (2) That begs two questions: (a) why would the disciples be reclining at a time like this? And (b) why would Jesus feel the need to speak instead of reclining? (3) The disciples read the situation wrong. I would have too. They listened to the crowds on Palm Sunday shouting "Hosanna." They witnessed the first battle in Jerusalem on Monday's temple cleaning. When he cursed the fig tree, confronted temple leaders, and spoke of conflict at the Mount of Olives, they thought that the moment was about to arrive. The Messiah was about to do what he was supposed to do. Like Judas Maccabee during the Maccabean revolt, he was going to finish the war. This was the pregame meal. (4) On the other hand, Jesus saw about to go to Gethsemane to sweat blood. He was about to hear Peter deny him in public. He was about to go on trial before the Sanhedrin and get spit on for being a blasphemer. He was about to go before Herod and Pilate. He was about to be scourged and whipped. He was about to be pierced for our

transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. (5) The disciples thought they knew the plans of God. They thought they were going to war. There was going to be a war alright. But they were the deserters. Only Jesus was going to fight this battle: on the cross.

- **App:** The Old Upper Room Table is a reminder that where we are often quite wrong, Jesus is and will always be right.

2. Where We Fail Most Often (19, 29, 31)

- **The Greatest to Place to Watch God Teaching Someone Humility:** (1) Is at Home Depot. Stay in there longer than 5 minutes and you'll see. (2) There's always somebody pushing a cart by themselves to a heavy object and then looking around because they know they can't lift it. (3) Then there's always someone else saying: "Sir or Ma'am, do you need me to get that for you?" (4) When they hear "well it's rather heavy." The response is usually: "Don't worry, I got this." (5) Bad things like back problems usually happen from that point forward.
- **The Lesson:** We fail most often at not realizing we are not as strong as we think we are. Peter said: "Even if I had to die with you, I will never disown you. He was wrong. So were the disciples, who said the exact same thing.
- **A Bad Rap, Three Statements, and Mark's Observation:** (1) We are inclined to think of Peter as the disciple who denied Jesus at the moment of truth. That is true. He did. But all but one of the others did to. Mark makes that clear to us here with three statements and an observation: (a) v19: one by one they said: "surely you don't mean me." (b) v29: "even if all fall away, I will not" (c) v31: "even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." (d) And then the most important statement in v31: "all of the others said the same." (2) Fast forward to a few hours later, Jesus is at Caiaphas's house denying him. Andrew, James, Philip, Nathanael, Thomas, Matthew, Thaddaeus, James the Less, and Judas are nowhere to be found. Mark tells us later in this chapter they deserted him. Only one didn't. His name was John.
- **App:** The Old Upper Room Table reminds us that whenever and wherever we have failed to be faithful, Jesus did not. He went to the cross because He was faithful where we could not be.

3. Where We Don't Want to Fail at All (20)

- **Quote About Judas Iscariot I Run into Frequently:** (1) "Jesus knew Judas Iscariot's heart, yet he still washed his feet." (2) Jesus didn't find out Judas was evil after he called him as disciple. He knew it beforehand. Jesus called Judas to teach us all that the most reprehensible sins in the world are used by God for His saving purposes.
- **The Lesson:** We know that the most reprehensible sins in the world are used by God for his saving purposes. But we never one to be the one God uses to prove that point. We never want to be Judas.
- **One of the Greatest Actions of Evil Ever Recorded and Why It Was Allowed Into the Inner Sanctum of Jesus' Ministry:** (1) One of the greatest acts of evil ever recorded in human history is right here and occurs before the Judas Kiss in Gethsemane. (2) It's in v20: "the one who dips bread into the bowl with me." That action in the Passover meal symbolized a very important story in the Old Testament: the betrayal of Joseph. To betray Joseph, his brothers dipped his coat into goat's blood. It was an action which initiated all of Israel's descent into slavery. Without the betrayal, there would have been no Joseph in Egypt and therefore no descent. But the betrayal started it all. (3) It's no coincidence that in the Last Supper, this act is being commemorated. It's a reminder of the bondage. It's a reminder of the evil of which we are all capable. It's a reminder of what evil does: it effects not just you, but others. (4) But friends, Jesus allowed Judas to be part of his inner sanctum for two reasons: (1) so the Scriptures would be fulfilled and (2) To show us that contrary to the betrayal of Joseph, the betrayal of Judas was the very thing God used to spur our deliverance from sin, not our bondage from Egypt.
- **App:** There is no evil action in this world that will thwart the plans of God. The Old Upper Room Table beckons us not to be the sermon illustration God uses to demonstrate it. The surest way to prevent Judas Tendencies, of which we are all capable, is to avoid patterns of deceit. For patterns of deceit under the presentations of loving righteousness and truthfulness is the worst kind of human evil.

4. Where We Can Prosper (22-24)

- **Lewis Edgar Jones:** (1) There once lived a man named Lewis Edgar Jones, born February 8, 1865, in Yates City, Illinois. (2) His father was a farmer. His grandfather was a farmer. He started to be a farmer before God changed his plans. (3) After hearing a traveling preacher come to town, he went to his farmhouse and wrote down these words "would you be free from the burden of sin? There's power in the blood." (4) He went on to write more than 200 other hymns, most of which were from that farmhouse, and toured the country with Billy Sunday. (5) Together both Jones and Sunday became the examples for George Beverly Shea and Billy Graham.
- **Lesson:** At the Old Upper Room Table, we learn that we can only prosper by the precious body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **We Can Prosper Because:** (1) The bread represents not only the body of Christ, but the fact that the "bread" that came from heaven to feed Israel as they went out of Egypt was temporary. The bread of the New Covenant – Jesus – is permanent. (2) Likewise, the cup represents not only the blood of Jesus that atones for our sin, but the fact that the "old" blood of calves, bulls, and goats was temporary and only sufficient until the next Passover. The cup of the New Covenant – the blood that Jesus shed – is permanent.
- **App:** The greatest lesson from that Old Upper Room Table is this: because of his body given for us and his blood shed for us, we can prosper. It's demonstrative proof that we may forsake him at times in our lives. But he will never forsake us.