

Unexpected Meal

October 11, 2020



Daily Devotionals Introduction

As you read about Jesus in the Gospels, you might see some things that perhaps you weren't expecting. For this 13-week series, we'll open the Book of Mark together and study the life of Jesus—The Unexpected King. During this series, we will gain a better understanding of who Jesus is and what it really means to be his disciple.

As an individual or as a family, use these daily devotionals and reflection questions to connect with Jesus each day this week.

Each day, there will be a thought stemming from our Scripture passage along with 2-3 questions. Our hope is that as we journey together through the book of Mark, we'll be able to come out the other side knowing more about the life of Jesus.

Be sure to prayerfully consider each day's truth, passages, and each of the questions. If you are a part of a life group, let these devotionals stir your thinking and be the foundation for your group conversation.

This week's hope and prayer is that, the next time you receive the Lord's Supper, it will be a bit different because you've spent time in this text from Mark 14. As you begin this week, ask God to show you how He might be inviting you to experience the Lord's Supper in a new way.

Day 1

It must have seemed like any other Passover night. The disciples asked Jesus about the preparations. Of course, they were used to this annual celebration—every year the people of God would gather the supplies needed for the prescribed meal, expectantly prepare, and celebrate together. It was what they did.

Every Passover celebration began in the afternoon with the slaughter of the lamb for the evening meal. This sacrificed lamb was not only the main dish, but also a tangible reminder of the way God had delivered the Hebrew people from slavery at the hands of the Egyptians. The night Jesus was betrayed was like every other Passover night—and yet completely unexpected in so many ways.

Since the beginning of creation, God sought covenant relationship with man in order to establish community. God’s covenant desire was to be our God and we to be His people. This covenant relationship was established through sacrifice, and the relationship confirmed at the table as the people consumed the sacrifice.

John Mark Hicks describes it this way:

The idea of “covenant” embodies relationship. A covenant between two persons is a relational bond rooted in the gracious initiative of one toward the other....A “covenant meal” seals and celebrates this commitment. By sacrifice the two parties make a covenant as they bind themselves together in mutual commitment and celebrate their new relationship by eating the sacrifice in a covenant meal. The altar establishes the covenant and the table celebrates it. The altar produces reconciliation and the table is the experience of that reconciliation. By sacrifice God makes a covenant with Israel and then invites them to sit at table in covenantal communion.¹

Jesus’ words in **Mark 14:23-24** turn this centuries-old practice of the Passover upside down. “Then taking the cup of wine and giving praises to the Father, he declared the new covenant with them. And as each one drank from the cup, he said to them, ‘This is my blood, which seals the new covenant poured out for many.’” He was about to become the once and for all sacrifice, transforming the covenant celebration.

Read these words from **Hebrews 9:11-15**:

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

¹John Mark Hicks, *Come to the Table* (Costa Mesa, CA: Leafwood Publishers, 2002), 27-28.

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

In the same way that Jesus' death abolished the animal sacrifices on the altar in the temple, so the Lord's Supper has become the table where we celebrate the new covenant. Adele Calhoun shares, "The radical nature of our sin problem resolves itself in innocent blood....Building on the old covenant, Jesus ushers in the new covenant."²

Take a look at this simple diagram:

PASSOVER	THE LORD'S SUPPER
In the old age of law	In the new age of the kingdom
The great festival meal celebrating the birth of God's people	The new celebratory meal of the birth of God's people
Participants associated themselves with deliverance and the old covenant	Participants associate themselves with redemption and the new covenant
Looks back to the Exodus and forward to God's salvation	Looks back to the cross, which brings salvation, and forward to the final realization of God's kingdom ³

Jesus invites the disciples to a new, unexpected way of celebrating. As we will see throughout this week, the Lord's Supper, like the Passover, was not just a token memorial, but a transformational one. "The Passover was not intended to be a gratifying memento of God's past deliverance of Israel. The celebration was meant to place each generation in touch with that event and make it a present reality. It celebrates what 'the Lord did for *me*' (cf. Ex. 13:8–9). In the same way, the Lord's Supper is not a memorial of something past and gone but reminds us of what the Lord has done for us and makes his death and his presence a living reality."⁴ Jesus invites us into this new covenant with Him, His chosen people, holy and dearly loved (**Colossians 3:12**).

What does it mean to know you're invited into a "covenant relationship" with God?

How does understanding the significance of the Passover help bring meaning to your celebration of the Lord's Supper?

Take a moment to reread the Hebrews passage. Can you imagine what it would be like to have to continually offer animal sacrifices for the forgiveness of your sins? Write a prayer thanking God for the once and for all sacrifice He provided through Christ.

²Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: Intersity Press, 2015), 35.

³ David E. Garland, *Mark*, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 533.

⁴ David E. Garland, *Mark*, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 534.

Day 2

I had the privilege of growing up in a church that observed the Lord's Supper each Sunday. While we took the elements of bread and wine (OK, grape juice) every week and I knew what the meal represented, I don't think I had fully felt the weight of the practice until I went to seminary. It wasn't learning about the Lord's Supper that changed things for me. Sure, that was helpful, but there was a particular moment when the reality of it struck me.

At the end of each intensive week of my master's program, we would gather for a simple worship service. The first time we did, I was surprised to see we would be taking the Lord's Supper together. We had spent the week learning together and had gotten to know one another. What happened next was not what I was expecting.

We sang a few songs, read a few Scriptures, and then our professor gave us instructions for receiving the Lord's Supper. She blessed the bread and juice, prayed a prayer of thanksgiving, and read the words Jesus Himself spoke at the Last Supper, reminding us this was His body and blood.

She went to the first person, spoke his name and then said aloud, "This is Christ's body broken for you," as she handed him the broken bread. He took it. "This is Christ's blood poured out for you," she said as she lifted the goblet toward him. He dipped the bread and ate it while all of us took it in.

As he was finished, she handed him the elements and he turned to the next person and repeated the process. It was so intensely personal. So unhurried. So beautiful.

When it was my turn, I heard my name spoken and then listened as the words washed over me, "This is Christ's body broken for you. And Christ's blood poured out for you." Sure, I had heard the words before and had read them in the gospels, but no one had ever spoken that phrase *to me* before. I know in other church traditions this phrase is spoken regularly, but I had never heard it quite like this. It felt profoundly personal. It was as though Jesus Himself was offering me the bread and wine.

Isn't that exactly what He does?

Read Mark 14:12-26.

We like to clean up this moment a bit more, but that afternoon when the disciples gathered with Jesus, a lamb was slaughtered to cover their sins. As they gathered around the table to celebrate the Passover, as they had done so many times before, they were aware of the cost of the meal placed before them. An innocent lamb had given its life for the celebration.

Adele Calhoun shares, "Jesus becomes the innocent lamb that takes away the sin of the world. Sacrificing his own life, he opens a doorway from death to life, from rebellion to friendship, from separation to communion and from senseless suffering to redemptive suffering."⁵

⁵ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2015), 35.

Your sin and my sin required Jesus to die. Every time we participate in this meal, we remember Jesus' broken body and shed blood. You've been invited to the table. Your invitation to *this* table cost Jesus His life.

Spend a few moments reflecting on the words of Christ. He says, "This is my body broken for you. This is my blood shed for you." What does that mean to you?

Imagine Christ Himself handing you the bread and the wine, speaking these words to you. How would you respond to Him?

Have you ever had a profound moment taking the Lord's Supper? What did that look like?

How have you received new life in Christ because of His sacrifice? Take a moment to pray a prayer of thanksgiving to Him for His invitation to the table.

Day 3

Yesterday we looked at the incredibly personal invitation Christ gives to each of us to come to the table. While Christ's invitation is intensely personal, the table isn't just set for two. It's a table that stretches as far as we can imagine.

And at this table, *everyone is welcome*.

This table isn't the first one we've seen in Mark where everyone is welcome. Last week we witnessed Jesus receiving an extravagant outpouring of love from a woman who broke open her alabaster jar of expensive perfume, anointing Him. This scene was one of many in the gospel of Mark where Jesus gathered around the table with some unexpected guests.

Jesus' ministry took place around a lot of tables. These meals included unexpected guests and unexpected provision. We first see Jesus dining with a bunch of tax collectors and "sinners" in **Mark 2:13-17**. When Jesus is approached about these unsavory guests, He simply replies, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (**Mark 2:17**).

We see Jesus miraculously providing a meal for over 5000 people in **Mark 6:30-44**. His unexpected provision serves a meal for those who need it with the simple beginnings of five loaves and two fish. He does the same for over 4000 people in **Mark 8:1-13** with only seven loaves and a few fish.

John Mark Hicks shares, "The kingdom of God at the table is inclusive because it welcomes all to the table. It includes females as well as males, slaves as well as free, poor as well as rich. It is deliverance for the oppressed and relief to the poor. The table bears witness to community."⁶

This new covenant Jesus offers is available to all.

And the twist is that *all of us need it desperately*.

According to Romans, we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (**Romans 3:23**). We need redemption. We need a sacrifice to cover our sins. The same sacrifice is required to cover them all.

Jesus' community was messy. Yet, He still invited each one of them to the table. Barbara Brown Taylor says,

When Jesus holds up the cup and offers what is in it as the fluid of forgiveness, he is not talking to people with a short list of minor sins. He is talking to people who will turn him in, who will scatter to the four winds at the first sign of trouble, and who will swear they never knew him. He is talking to people who should have been his best friends on earth who turn out not to have a loyal bone in their bodies, and he is forgiving them ahead of time, as surely as if he had said, "I know who you are. I know you will not be innocent of the blood of this cup, but I will not let that come between us....Let my life become your life, through the blood of this covenant."⁷

⁶ John Mark Hicks, *Come to the Table* (Costa Mesa, CA: Leafwood Publishers, 2002).

⁷ Calhoun, 35.

Take a moment to read through Mark 14:12-26. As you read, imagine the faces around the table. Allow yourself to envision Judas at the table, who would betray Jesus, and Peter, who would deny Jesus as well. Enter the scene as you read.

What do you notice as you read the text with this in mind?

Read through the text once more, envisioning yourself sitting at the table. Think of the ways you've needed forgiveness from God, yet you are still invited to this table. What do you sense Jesus saying to you as you sit at the table with Him?

We are worthy of the Lord's Supper when we recognize how unworthy we are. We feel its power when we also recognize that Jesus died for us and accepts us in spite of our unworthiness.⁸

If this table invitation is truly available to everyone, who is it that you have trouble envisioning next to you at the table? Invite God to help you see His limitless invitation.

Take some time today to pray, thanking God for inviting you to His table.

⁸ David E. Garland, [Mark](#), *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 535.

Day 4

Mark 14:22 says, “He took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take it; This is my body.’”

Taken, Blessed, Broken, Given.

While these words typically remind us of the last supper, this *body* also refers to the collective Body of Christ.

When we participate in the covenant meal, taking the bread, blessing it, and breaking it, we are then invited to be given to others in service. Jesus demonstrated the importance of servanthood at this very meal.

Read John 13:1-17.

John Mark Hicks reminds us, “Servanthood is the heart of God...the servanthood of Jesus as the revealer of God is best illustrated by Jesus’ relationship to the table....The table is not about power, control or authority....It is about mutual service and ministry. The table is where we serve each other. The table embodies the mutual love and respect we have for each other as we sit at the table with the host who served us all.”⁹ Jesus demonstrated this very truth at every table where He reclined. He invited everyone and He served.

Jesus tells His disciples, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (**John 13:14-17**).”

The invitation to us is the same. As disciples of Jesus, we are invited to servanthood. Hicks says,

When disciples sit at the table together with Jesus as the host, they commit themselves to imitate him. They commit themselves to be servants. Just as Jesus served us, even to the extent of sacrificing his life, so disciples commit to serve each other as Jesus served them....To sit at the table and deny ministry to another is to undermine the meaning of the gospel. The table must extend beyond the worship assembly as it shapes the ministry of God’s people throughout the week.¹⁰

Henri Nouwen describes it like this:

When Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, he summarized in these gestures his own life. Jesus is chosen from all eternity, blessed at his baptism in the Jordan River, broken on the cross, and given as bread to the world. Being chosen, blessed, broken, and given is the sacred journey of the Son of God, Jesus the Christ. When we take bread, bless it, break

⁹ John Mark Hicks, 78-79.

¹⁰ John Mark Hicks, 79.

it, and give it with the words “This is the Body of Christ,” we express our commitment to make our lives conform to the life of Christ. We too want to live as people chosen, blessed, and broken, and thus become food for the world.¹¹

As we finish today, take some time to slowly pray through the prayer below, taking time to sit with each section.¹²

As you begin to pray, quiet yourself, asking God to lead and guide you through this prayer. Invite Him to speak to you. If you need to sit for a few moments to quiet your mind, that’s OK. Don’t move on until you feel ready.

Taken

Thank God for taking you—for claiming you—for calling you by name. If you are baptized, spend some moments reflecting on the meaning of your baptism. Bring to mind whatever has brought you to this moment of prayer with God. Consider how God has led your life to this point and that you are in God’s hands, whether you are always aware of it or not. Sit with this question: *How have I been claimed by God?*

Blessed

Recognizing how God has taken you and led you, thank God for the many blessings in your life. Do not move on until you experience gratitude in your heart. Then, thank God for some of the unique talents, abilities, aptitudes, and callings God has given you. *How have I been blessed by God?*

Broken

Ask God to reveal the ways you have felt the opposite of blessed. When have you felt broken? The death or loss of a loved one? A failed relationship? Abuse or trauma? Difficulty in career? Lack of direction in life? Perhaps there is a personal weakness, physical, mental, or spiritual, that you have which makes you feel broken. Though this may be difficult or unpleasant, take a long, loving, honest look at your brokenness. Talk to God about this. Allow His love to lead you.

Given

Now ask God to show you how the ways you’ve been broken prepare you to share God’s love with others. Maybe your brokenness gives you better understanding of others’ pain. Perhaps your brokenness has strengthened you for some task God is calling you to. Meditate on this for a while. Ask how God is giving you to the world. Imagine concrete ways how you can be a gift to others. Allow yourself to daydream about the possibilities. Thank God for redeeming your brokenness. Humbly thank God for the gifts He’s given you for the world. Resolve to give yourself to God and the world in whatever way God has revealed.

¹¹ <https://henrinouwen.org/meditation/becoming-food-world/> (accessed September 27, 2020).

¹² Prayer of Examen adapted from <https://godinallthings.com/prayer/taken-blessed-broken-and-given-an-examen/>

Day 5

Because God works within time, He deliberately chose the time and place of the death and resurrection of Christ, making it no coincidence that the event was aligned with the Jewish Passover. The theme of deliverance from slavery in Egypt was easily transferred to the celebration of the resurrection and redemption through Christ. The connection was of great significance.

When Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples, they were celebrating the Passover feast. Jesus introduced them to a new way of remembering time. Jesus gave thanks as He broke the bread. As it was shared, He said, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (**Luke 22:19** NIV, *emphasis added*).

In remembrance of me. The disciples already understood they were to remember because their heritage had taught them to remember. This type of remembering, however, was new.

The Greek word for *remember* in this passage is *anamnesis*. Simply defined, *anamnesis* means “a reminder or remembrance.”¹³ A simple definition is not enough, however, when considering the Western perspective of remembering past events as memorials or memories alone. “The ancient *anamnesis* (remembrance) was not seen as a mere memorialism, something we *do* with our memory. Rather, the remembrance is an action of God in which Christ’s saving action becomes present.”¹⁴

Christ’s saving action that took place in a specific time in chronological history becomes present tense. His death on a cross and resurrection over two thousand years ago *has power in this very moment*. *Anamnesis* is an “active remembrance.” Christ’s single act of salvation that took place in one chronological moment in history has power now. *Right now*.

Author Warren Wiersbe describes,

Our Lord’s command was, “This do in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24–25). The word translated “remembrance” means much more than “in memory of,” for you can do something in memory of a dead person—yet Jesus is alive! The word carries the idea of a present participation in a past event. Because Jesus is alive, as we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, by faith we have communion with Him (1 Cor. 10:16–17). This is not some “magical” experience produced by the bread and cup. It is a spiritual experience that comes through our discerning of Christ and the meaning of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:27–34).¹⁵

Jesus is alive! He is alive and working to transform us. His defeat of sin and death has the power to change our lives in the here and now. Because of what He did, we can say with all confidence, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (**1 Corinthians 15:55**)

¹³ James Swanson. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*, electronic ed., DBLG 390–391. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

¹⁴ Robert E. Webber, “Worship and Spirituality,” *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, vol. 7, ed. by Robert Webber (Nashville, Tenn.: Star Song Pub. Group, 1994), 324.

¹⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), Mk 14:12.

The power of the cross is real. We have victory and freedom because of Jesus' triumph over the cross and the grave. Paul writes in Ephesians about his prayers for us to fully know our access to this power.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and *his incomparably great power* for us who believe. *That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead* and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (**Ephesians 1:18-21**, *emphasis added*.)

The same power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that changes us. Not only did Christ pay for our sins so we could be blameless and pure before a holy God, but when He was raised from the dead, He exerted the power over sin and death that *makes us new*.

The power of the cross makes things new. The cross repairs. The cross restores. The cross allows God to work for good in every single circumstance. The table of the Lord's Supper gives us space to remember what the cross can do in us.

When we remember what Christ has done, we are changed. When we encounter the *living God* and receive His redemption, restoration happens. Our stories are different. Those who are trying so hard to be perfect on their own are made perfect in Christ. The self-righteous are forgiven by grace. The broken are mended. The hurting are healed. Those who mourn find joy. Those who are afraid find courage. The anxious find peace. Captives are set free.

David Garland says it well:

The Lord's Supper works for good. It reminds us who we are, what our story is, what our values are, and who claims us as his own. In the Lord's Supper, the gospel confronts all five of our physical senses. We see, hear, taste, smell, and touch what it meant for Christ to die for us. It also binds the past, present, and future together. We look back to Jesus' Last Supper and experience the beginning of the new covenant with God. We experience Jesus' death for us and the power of our sins being forgiven in the present. We look forward to the future celebration in God's kingdom, when all will acknowledge Jesus as Lord.¹⁶

How have you been changed by the cross of Jesus?

How would your life be different if you remembered Christ in this way? If you believed the same power that raised Christ from the dead was living within you?

How will your experience of the Lord's Supper be different as a result of what you've experienced in your time with God this week?

¹⁶ David E. Garland, [Mark](#), *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 534.