

March 28, 2013  
Questions for Holy Week

*Why Remember?*  
Mark 14:12-26

**Opening words:** There are 52 weeks every year. Each one is important and not a single one should be wasted. Have you ever stopped to consider how many weeks have occurred in the history of the world? However, there is one week that changed our world forever, Holy Week! On the Christian calendar Holy Week is the last week of Lent, beginning on Palm Sunday and ending at dawn on Easter. It is the week the church remembers the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry. It recalls the expectations of Palm Sunday, the rejection of Maundy Thursday, the devastation of Good Friday and the final victory of Easter morning.

May we never forget what Jesus did each day. According to the Gospel of Mark:

On Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. He was communicating to his generation that he was the Messiah. He had reached his point of no return.

On Monday, Jesus cleansed the temple. It has nothing to do with the youth fundraising in the hallway. It has nothing to do with selling dinner tickets to aid the budget. However, it is about religious leaders abusing their position for personal gain.

On Tuesday, Jesus cursed the fig tree. It was the only thing that Jesus cursed. I hope you remember the fig tree symbolized Israel itself. It is like burning an American flag. They got the message.

On Wednesday, Jesus taught in the temple courts about the Kingdom of God. They are some of Jesus' most memorable words. I would encourage you to read them.

This is Thursday of Holy Week. We call it Maundy Thursday. Other traditions call it by other names: Covenant Thursday, Great and Holy Thursday, Sheer Thursday and Thursday of Mysteries. Regardless of the name, it is always the Thursday before Easter. Four great things happened on that day. First, Jesus washed the disciple's feet, showing them the importance of humility and service. Second, Jesus transformed the traditional Seder into a memorial for the ages. Third, Jesus was arrested while praying in the garden, betrayed by one of his closest, Judas Iscariot. Fourth and finally Jesus was tried and found guilty of by his own people, the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of his faith. It is during this trial Peter disowned Jesus three times. May God be with us as we remember that holy day.

---

**Mark 14:12-26** <sup>12</sup> On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

<sup>13</sup> So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. <sup>14</sup> Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' <sup>15</sup> He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

<sup>16</sup> The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

<sup>17</sup> When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup> 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."

<sup>19</sup> They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"

<sup>20</sup> "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup> 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."

<sup>22</sup> 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."

<sup>23</sup> Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

<sup>24</sup> "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. <sup>25</sup> "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."

<sup>26</sup> When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

---

How is your memory? I heard of an older couple that was having some trouble remembering, so they signed up to take a memory course together. A few months later the husband was out working in his garden when a neighbor stopped by and began to talk to him about the memory course. "What was the name of the instructor?" he asked. The husband paused, then asked, "What is the name of that flower that smells so nice but has thorns?" "You mean a rose?" the neighbor answered. "Yeah that's it... Hey Rose, what's the name of that guy who taught us the memory course?" How is your memory?

It is impossible to remember everything. How many things have you forgotten recently? When was the last time you forgot a loved one's birthday? When was the last time you lost your keys? When was the last time you forgot to return a phone call? Is there some secondary person in your life you don't call by name because you forgot their name? Have you ever forgotten to get milk at the store or to pick up a youngster from school? Have you ever forgotten where you parked at the mall or the grocery store? You can admit it. We have all forgotten something. Sometimes, it doesn't matter. For example, I can never remember Ronald Reagan's first wife. Sometimes, it does matter.

(Don't forget to file your taxes by April 15!)

This evening we remember an event that you must never forget.

It is imperative that you remember Jesus' last Seder. It would be his last meal before his appointment with the cross. For it is at that meal Jesus gave us a memorial for the ages. You know the scene. It has been reenacted in movies and inspired some of the greatest pieces of art. That makes it easy to imagine this evening's Gospel lesson. According to the text, the disciples are wondering about the Passover meal. This is not shocking. It was the reason they came to Jerusalem. They had been observing the Passover meal annually since childhood. Jesus sends two of the disciples ahead to make the arrangements. When Jesus arrives everything is ready in that upper room. The menu for the meal was traditional. Each course represented something from the story of the exile. Every word was scripted. No one dared change a single word, but Jesus did change the words. Instead of just remembering the past, Jesus began to talk about the future. He began to speak of the period of time when he would be separated from his disciples. We know the words that he uttered because we are his contemporary disciples. The bread represents his body. The wine represents his blood. He gave us those elements for one reason. He didn't want to be forgotten. Remembering Jesus is extremely important.

On this Maundy Thursday I want to answer the question *Why Remember?* We remember things for three reasons. Let me give them to you now. First, we remember past events. Not every day is the same. Some days are more important. Second, we remember past lessons. It is important that we learn from history. That way we can eliminate mistakes. Third and finally, we remember past values. In other words, past events define us and shape our core values. So if you are ready to begin, say, "**Amen!**"

### **Past Events**

Did you know in the state of Ohio there are 1420 historical markers? Each one has been placed by the Ohio Historical Society. I think my father read every one. It used to drive me crazy when I was young. Now I read as many as I can. Time changes things. Did you know there are 16 historical markers within the zip code of this church? Maybe you have seen them? Has anyone read the marker at the old Mahoning Dispatch Building or the one at the Pioneer Pavilion? Each one exists for the same reason. They don't want you to forget the past.

The disciples observed that annual Seder for the same reason. It was a meal designed to remember the past. It was a meal designed to teach the youngest about their past. Each participant heard the story again. Their ancestors were held in bondage in Egypt. They had no hope of liberation so God sent them a leader. His name was Moses. He spoke on behalf of God to the Pharaoh and announced a series of plagues. Each one was miserable. There was the plagues of blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, boils, hail, locust and darkness. However, the last plague was the worst, the plague on the first-born. It was that plague that changed the heart of Pharaoh. He released the Hebrews.

We remember because there are events that should not be forgotten. It is not just true of them. It is true of us. We should never forget the events of that upper room. If you find some truth there, say, "**Amen!**" We remember because past events are important. We remember because past events hold lessons.

### **Past Lessons**

Someone asked me recently, "What is the worst thing about traveling?" I think he wanted to hear about bad food and lumpy beds. Instead, I told him about airport security. If you have traveled in the past twelve years you know it is true. It is part of the day. You take off your shoes. You take off your belt. You empty your pockets. You show your boarding pass and passport. You step into the machine to get x-rayed and you are patted down by someone who needs a breath mint. It is annoying but I never complain. Why? You know the answer. We have learned from the past. September 11 changed our world. Someone once said, "*Growing up is learning from yesterday's mistakes.*" How many times have you said, "I will never do that again!" We remember so we don't make the same mistakes again. If you find some truth there, then say, "**Amen!**" We remember because past events are important. We remember because past events hold lessons. We remember because those events remind us of our core values.

### **Past Values**

The Seder is designed to help people remember the past. However, the Seder is designed to do more. It is an annual reminder to the Jews that their relationship with God is unique. They call themselves "God's Chosen People." It is a statement that is hard to argue with when you remember the events in the wilderness. Pharaoh had changed his mind and sent his army to retrieve the slaves. Moses had led the people to the shore of the Red Sea. Things looked bad. The people could not go back because of the army. The people could not go forward because of the water. They were trapped and they had no hope. However, they are God Chosen People so God divided the waters for them. The water was held back for the Hebrews but not for the Egyptians. It is not just a story of a miracle; it is a reminder that they are special. When they remember it they remember their core values.

When we partake of the body and the blood of Christ you are not just remembering some past event. You are remembering our core values. You have a unique relationship with God. You are a disciple of Jesus Christ! And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"

The Taj Mahal in Agra, India is considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The history is interesting. It was built in the 1600's by the fifth Mughal emperor, Shah Jahah. He built it as a memorial for his wife, Mumtaz Hahal. The building, itself, is truly amazing. It is an octagonal building with walls measuring 130 feet long by 70' high and it is surmounted by a dome, adding an addition 120' in height. It is constructed entirely out of white marble, which is reflected by a huge pool.

The interior design is magnificent, containing 12 types of inlaid stones, and mosaics of great beauty. Many consider the Maj Mahal the greatest memorial in the world today. They are wrong.

The greatest memorial today is found at the Communion table of every church. It is the body and the blood of Christ. When we come to the Communion table we remember. It is important that we remember past events. It is important that we remember past lessons. It is important that we remember past values. And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**