

Jesus' Last Supper

Scripture

Matthew 26:17-30

Mark 14:12-26

Luke 22:7-23

[John 13:1-17, mentions footwashing, not Last Supper]

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Memory Verse

“the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’

²⁵In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” -- 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (NRSV)

Bible Background

There is a similar flow through Matthew Mark and Luke. All contain a version of the following:

- Preparation for the Passover. Jesus gives them instructions how to find the location for the Passover.
- One of you will betray me. One of the people eating with Jesus will betray him.
- Sharing the elements of communion. Slight variations in each version as to what was said. In Luke the elements are shared first, and then the question about who will betray Jesus. This means that in Luke's Gospel, Judas received communion.
- Going to the Mount of Olives. In Matthew and Mark this is where Peter's denial is foretold. In Luke the denial occurs in the context of the Last Supper.

Luke adds a great deal to what Matthew and Mark describe. There is a dispute amongst the disciples about greatness, which in the other gospels appears several chapters earlier. Luke 22:35-38 is an unusual statement about purse, bag, and sword, which seems to imply that Jesus wants the disciples to fight. If that is correct, in vs. 51 he clearly changes his mind.

What are we to make of the differences in Luke? Luke is also the only gospel writer who mentions the Road to Emmaus where the resurrected Christ is recognized in the broken bread. One possibility is that Luke is speaking to the idea -- which still exists in some circles -- that one must be righteous, and “understand” communion before receiving it. The extremely unrighteous Judas received communion and at Emmaus, the disciples received understanding only *after* the breaking of the bread, not before.

What about John? In the gospel of John there is no mention of communion. Instead, Jesus washes his disciples feet. There is, however the story of the Wedding at Cana, where Jesus turns water into wine (John 2) and the breakfast at the Sea of Tiberius after the resurrection (John 21). There is also John 6 where Jesus feeds 5,000 and then declares “I am the bread of life.” (John 6:35)

Teaching this Story to Kids

Two things should be emphasized. One, for Christians this story is so central to who we are, that any time bread or wine is mentioned, we look at it as being symbolic of communion. So the story of the Wedding at Cana in John, where Jesus turns water into wine, is a sign of God's abundance and new life found in the communion meal. Or Jesus feeding the disciples on the beach after his resurrection, where he commands Peter "feed my sheep, feed my lambs, tend my sheep" is a sign of the ministry and mission that flows out of our communion. As you teach children, recall some of these other stories with them, even if they aren't explicitly part of the lesson. Second, don't assume that children make the connection between the story of the Last Supper in the Bible and Holy Communion as practiced in the church. The words of institution "On the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus took bread..." are in the communion liturgy, but the kids may not hear it unless pointed out to them. Particularly if you are teaching on a communion Sunday, encourage them to listen to the communion service, evening bringing and marking bulletins with them so they know when the words are coming.

Three of the rotations: art, cooking and music are concerned with baking bread, creating a bread place and writing a hymn for use in the communion service in worship. Before planning lessons, coordinate with the worship planning team to find out when communion will be celebrated.

Lesson Summary

- Creation Station* - Children will make a class project: a mosaic bread plate for use in the communion service.
- Fisherman's Net* - Children will use the computer program "Jesus in Space" to explore the Last Supper
- Loaves and Fishes Café* – Children will bake unleavened bread that will be used later in the morning by the congregation for communion.
- Mountaintop Movies* - Children will watch the NEST Entertainment DVD "Bread from Heaven" and answer the questions at the end.
- Moved by the Spirit* - Children will write a hymn that will be sung by the congregation at the next communion service.
- Temple Courtyard* - Children will play a life sized board game "Loaves and Chalices" in which they answer questions about the Bible story the Last Supper and our church's traditions surrounding communion.

Bibliography