

## Title: “Breaking Bread with Broken Hearts”

Chris Ryan

Matthew 26:17-30

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**Lesson:** *The disciples were not simply celebrating an event, celebrating their emancipation, they were celebrating their identity as God’s chosen people. We are God’s chosen people, a people that he gathers together to share in his forgiveness of our sins. We are joined in His story of love, and mercy, and grace. We approach this same table with broken hearts but leave forgiven and free.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Why are you here, in this church, tonight? What has drawn you out to gather with other Christians on this Holy Thursday? I am aware that the questions are abrupt and maybe even curt, but tonight is a heavy night, weighed down by sorrowful anticipation about the events that are soon to unfold. We know that tonight Jesus will agonize in the garden, overwhelmed by sadness and anguish. While his apostles sleep, he will sweat drops of blood. We know that a little while later he will be arrested, and over the following hours will be beaten, whipped almost to death, and then crucified. Yes, we can see Easter morning, but tonight, tonight that seems very far off.

We know why the apostles were gathered together on this night. They were simply doing what they had done year after year after year. This was a time of celebration; a time when they would remember their deliverance out of Egypt. When they would remember God’s mercy on them. For them, this was more than just simply another holiday, void of meaning, originating outside their culture. This festival *was* their culture. It was who they were, and that story extended backwards thousands of years before them, all the way back to Abraham. They were not simply celebrating an event, celebrating their emancipation, they were celebrating their identity as God’s chosen people. They believed that they *were* still part of the story and so their celebrations were as much about the present as it was about the past. And so, when they sat down to share a meal together, they sat down and shared a table with their fathers, and their fathers’ fathers, and with all the Israelites of old. This is what the night meant to them.

But then Jesus did something completely unexpected.

<sup>26</sup> [A]s they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” <sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

On that night, Jesus began to reveal the real meaning of the festival. He began to show the disciples that their freedom was not from the Egyptians, but from death and the devil. Later he

would make his way to the cross, engage in a battle with the forces of evil, and vanquish them; and then freely hand his victory over to all who would receive it. And later the disciples would realize that the blood of the unblemished lamb that they ate that night was merely a temporary substitute for this precious blood of Christ.

But tonight, he reaffirmed their connection to the prophets of the Old Testament and to the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, And, that night he *also* connected *us* as well. He affirmed *our* connection to the Old Testament and to his chosen people. We became *included* in his number. No longer were the demarcations based on nationality but were instead based on faith in Jesus. On this night the Universal Church was established. And his blood would be poured out for *all* who believe, not just all *Jews* who believed.

I'm reminded of a story about a homeless man who, one cold evening, entered a church because he heard the music playing and the choir singing. It was a Christmas Eve service, so the pews were packed, filled from end to end with well-dressed families. Seeing no free seat, this man, unwashed, unshaven, and unclean, continued up the center aisle until he reached the front. And there, at the foot of the pulpit, he sat. The pastor continued to preach but the congregation was clearly distracted by this man's actions and became even more distracted as they saw an elder slowly approach him. Upon reaching the man, the elder slowly, and quietly sat down next to him so that he wouldn't sit alone.

You see, we are *all* invited, through faith in Jesus Christ, to gather together around the table of the Lord. Christ denies *no one*, regardless of who they are, or where they have come from. He gathers us just as we are - unclean from sin, broken from shame.

On that night, around the table, Jesus gathered his disciples. And in the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine, he gathered us, too. And we sit there with him, at that table. It may not seem like it, but when as we eat *his* body and drink *his* blood, we share *his* table: a table that we also share with our fathers, and our father's fathers, and the disciples, and all the way back to Abraham. Tonight, we gather as the Church, disconnected by time but connected by the need for forgiveness.

And this is why you are here tonight. This is what has drawn you to gather with other Christians, even in this virtual setting. To receive the forgiveness of sins, the *same* forgiveness of sins that was spoken by Jesus the night before he was crucified. We gather to share the same body, *his* body, and that same blood, *his* blood, that he gave to his disciples. And although we cannot physically gather together around his table tonight, we look forward to the day when we can once again return.

Would you pray with me?

Gracious Lord, Jesus Christ! We are sinners, unclean and unworthy, but you gather us to your table and offer us your body and your blood; you offer us your forgiveness. We come empty handed and heavy hearted, but we leave forgiven and free. Thank you for your mercy and grace.

In your name we pray. Amen