

Title: “They Sang a Hymn”

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Matthew 26:30

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Service Readings: Exodus 12:1-14; Matthew 26:17-30

³⁰ *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

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.

Unlike the other Jewish festivals that we explored these past weeks, the Passover is one we are probably most familiar with. We know that God instituted it on the eve of the Israelite’s exodus from slavery, and we know that it continues to be celebrated every year, just as he commanded. Part of the feast including selecting a lamb without blemish and sacrificing it. And after that, taking some of its blood and placing it on their doorposts. The reason given was to protect them from the angel of death that would visit that night. But you know this already.

You also know that when Jesus celebrated this feast on the night before his arrest, he provided a truer meaning of this festival by pointing it to himself. He taught them that this festival really pointed to *him*. *He* was the lamb that was selected for sacrifice. *His* blood would cover their sins and protect them from the sting of death. They may not have understood it that night, but they would come to understand it, just like we have come to understand it in our own day.

So where should we focus our thoughts tonight? These two readings provide an overabundance of ways to better understand Jesus and to probe deeper into what we already know. But as I reflect on this passage, one verse keeps leaping out of the page. It is this one from Matthew:

³⁰ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

When we read this from the perspective of the disciples, it seems very reasonable. Every year they had observed this festival and this year was no different. To them it was probably only noteworthy because of what Jesus had said and done at the dinner when he shifted the focus of the meal to himself. They probably had the wrong understanding of it and they may have contemplated it after the meal, but other than that, it was just a normal feast. And so they sang a hymn and followed their teacher to the mount.

But when we read this from the perspective of Jesus, things change quite a bit. We must first step back to Palm Sunday when they entered Jerusalem, though. We know that he rode a colt into the city and the crowd cheered him on, but have you ever considered what he saw while entering? Outside the gate, beyond the crowds were probably men in various stages of crucifixion. Can you imagine what must have passed through his mind at that moment? He was being viewed as a king, a savior, and he knew that he *would be soon*, but not in the way that they expected. His path would *not* take him directly from the front gate of the city to the castle throne like the people hoped.

Instead, it would take him to the cross where he would be one of those anguished, tortured men. And only after he suffered would he be seated on a throne, but not in Jerusalem. Instead, it would be at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

And moving past Palm Sunday, can you imagine what he must have thought as he spoke the words during the Passover dinner? Matthew records this moment:

⁶ Now as 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." ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the ^(c) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The disciples were surely confused by these words, but Jesus wasn't. He knew perfectly well what it would mean to have his body physically broken and his blood literally poured out. These words were very real to him and a foreshadow of what he knew he would soon experience, what he knew he was sent into creation to accomplish. *All* of history had led to this very moment. *Everything* pointed to it. He had known that this day would come since before time began and he had willingly obeyed when the Father sent him to fulfill the promise that had been made to Abraham. And the day had now arrived. *His* body would soon be broken. *His* blood would soon be poured out. This must have weighed heavy on him. How could he have sung a hymn of praise?

You see, the disciples didn't understand what was going on and so they sang; unaware of what was about to take place. But Jesus?

While they celebrated his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus carried the weight of what he would soon endure.

While they participated in the Passover Meal, Jesus carried the weight of what he would soon endure.

While they sang a hymn, Jesus carried the weight of what he would soon endure.

And he would continue carrying this weight as they slept before he was arrested, and as they ran from the mob, and as they denied that they were his followers. He would carry it all the way to the grave before he would be able to declare victory.

And so on that night he taught his disciples that the sacrificial, Passover lamb from the Exodus was really him. And he taught his disciples that the blood he would shed, *his* blood, would be used to cover *their* sins, protecting them from eternal death. And he offered them his body and his blood, broken and poured out. "Take, eat," he said. "Take, drink.... this is *my* blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

They took the bread and they took the wine. And they ate. And he gave himself over to man to be crucified. And he became sin for us. And he suffered separation from the Father. And he did it all while still praising the one who sent him.

We don't celebrate the feast of Passover, not as it was instituted. We celebrate what it points to, the feast of our Lord, who became the lamb of God to take away our sins. But as we participate in it, I pray that we reflect on it anew and consider, if only for a moment, how that meal itself, and

even the whole week, must have weighed on Jesus. And then let us also sing a hymn, praising God the Father.

Please pray with me.

Lord, by your sacrifice you have opened the gates of heaven for us. By faith we believe this but by reason we can never fully comprehend it. But we praise you for the suffering that you endured on our behalf. Give us the motivation to sing your praises to the world, that they might come to know what you have done for them.

Amen.