



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for March 1, 2020**  
**"According to Luke: Body and Blood"**  
**Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb**  
**Scripture: Luke 22:7-23**

## **The Lenten Journey**

I can't believe Lent is upon us. The year is flying by.

Lent is a great journey and affords us the opportunity to draw closer to God.

To that end we are making available a Lenten devotional titled *40 Days with Jesus* by Sarah Young. Many of you will know Sarah Young as the author of the great devotional book, *Jesus Calling*. I hope you take one and make a practice of reading from it each and every day.

We are also embarking upon a whole church study that for all intents and purposes will spring off the scripture for the week. Those study guides are available for use by our small groups or for individual study and reflection.

During Lent we will be studying the last week of Christ's life from the Gospel of Luke. This new sermon series is titled, *According to Luke*. I look forward to moving through the scripture from one event to the other, letting the scripture speak as we go along.

That said, our scripture for this morning is Luke 22:7-23, the account of Christ with his disciples in the Upper Room. I can think of no better scripture to introduce this new sermon series, particularly given the fact that just a bit later we will be sharing the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

*Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."*

*"Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.*

*He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there."*

*They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.*

*When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."*

*After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I*

*will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”*

*And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”*

*In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!” They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this. (Luke 22:7-23)*

## **Memory Is a Precious Thing**

Memory is a precious thing.

Aristotle once said that *“memory is the scribe of the soul.”*

Susan Beaumont in her book, *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You Are Going* writes, *“Remembering rightly is important work.”* She goes on to talk about how our memories help form our identity, values, and beliefs.

Theologian Miroslav Volf reminds us that *“when we sever ourselves from our memories, we lose our identity, particularly the part of our memory that is rooted in God.”*

Memory is that important.

None of us should ever take for granted the ability to remember. We know all too well the pain and confusion when memory either erodes or is gone entirely.

Those who suffer from various forms of dementia are constantly in our prayers. So are their families.

Our memories give us a sense of rootedness. To a large extent we are a summation of the experiences we remember, many of which we can recount as if they happened just yesterday.

We remember people and circumstances, joys and sorrows, and, hopefully, special encounters with God.

If anything, we are the sum of our experiences. Learning from those experiences has all the potential to make us better people.

Samuel Johnson once wrote, *“The world does not require so much to be informed as reminded.”*  
Samuel Johnson

Those who wrote the Bible were quick to remember as well.

For instance, the Bible is full of long lists of genealogies. To track one's lineage was a tangible way to track God's good work over multiple generations. God has always leaned into the lives of those who seek to follow him.

Today, the number of people researching their family trees is at an all-time high. Websites like *Ancestry.com* have made doing so much easier.

Through scripture we are repeatedly encouraged to remember God's story and his love as demonstrated through that story.

Hear this from Deuteronomy 32:7: *"Remember the days of old, consider the years long past; ask your father, and he will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you."*

Jesus knew the importance of memory. He knew the importance of being reminded. He particularly wants us to be mindful of the things he did. He knew that as we remember those things we would be built up and drawn closer to him.

That's why Jesus upon meeting with his disciples in the Upper Room said, *"Do this in remembrance of me."*

Jesus, particularly, wants us to remember the cross and what he did there. To forget the cross is to forget the fundamental thing he had come to do.

William Lumpkin in writing about how important remembering is says this, *"Love and forgetting do not belong together. They are, in fact, nearly contradictory."*

Jesus knew that if his disciples truly loved him they would not forget who he was and what he did.

How does that sort of thing play out in your life?

### **One Last Opportunity to Teach**

Having a sense that his life here on earth would soon be over, Jesus gathered his disciples around him for one last opportunity to teach them about the significance of his death. The Passover meal set the perfect context for that.

Passover, as much as anything, celebrates the means by which the Children of Israel were able to escape their slavery in Egypt.

Against the backdrop of the Passover meal, Jesus turned things just a bit to teach about how through him we are able to escape the evil that holds us captive as well.

For Jesus the opportunity to instruct his disciples one last time was so important that he didn't leave anything to chance.

He sent Peter and John into town to get things finalized. He told them to look for a man carrying a jar of water. Carrying water was women's work so the man would have been easy to spot.

The portion of the house where Christ met with his disciples was an upper room. Upper rooms would have been built as a second floor to more well-to-do homes.

They were often used by Rabbis to teach their followers. Jesus, being a teacher himself, felt right at home there.

It was there in that upper room that Jesus instructed his disciples about the things he would soon be doing, things they not only needed to remember, but experience.

### **According to Luke**

According to Luke, we read that Jesus took one of the cups of the Passover meal and instructed his disciples about the coming Kingdom. (cf. Luke 22:17-18)

According to Luke, we read that Jesus took the bread and talked about his body being offered up. (cf. Luke 22:19)

According to Luke, we read that Jesus referred to his blood being poured out as the very thing signaling a brand new covenant between God and his wayward creation. (cf. Luke 22:20)

Christ's body and blood form the basis of Christ's atoning work on the cross and those who follow him not only need to remember that, but experience that.

One of the great things about the Lenten season is that it puts us in the shadow of the cross and gives us the opportunity to experience the sweet release of Christ's forgiveness.

### **The Power of Relationship**

Every time we gather around this table we are called to remember the great things God has done through his Son Jesus Christ.

When we gather around his table we don't just look back, but also consider what's going on in the present

We don't just remember what Jesus did, but consider what he is doing right now.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is not mired in some past event, but is very much a present tense issue.

It calls us to consider our own relationship with Christ.

As great as the power of memory is, the power of relationship is that much greater.

When we come around his table the power of relationship is heightened all the more. We don't just remember, but revel in the fact that he is with us right now in very real ways.

When we gather around the table of our Lord we contemplate the great power of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

We are awakened, yet again, to the fact that forgiveness is offered to all who *"earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another."*

When we gather around the table of our Lord we sense very deeply that God bends our way and seeks to touch our lives. God wants to be in relationship with us.

We are given pause then around his table to consider the state of that relationship—where it is strong and where it needs attention. That's very much a part of the Lenten journey.

The meal we are about to partake is a highway into God's presence, a means of grace, if you will. Through it we become keenly aware of the free gift of God's love and that he wants to touch our lives.

I love this prayer, *"Reveal thy presence now, O Lord, as in the Upper Room of old; keep our hearts from growing cold."*

### **An Act to Perform**

Theologian N. T. Wright writes, *"The Lord's Supper is not just a theory, but an act to perform."*

Even though there is a lot that can be said about this meal, it is not enough just to talk about Communion, it comes to us to experience it. Make no mistake about it you are invited to do just that.