

“A LONG NIGHT’S JOURNEY INTO DAY” Ex. 12, Rom. 13

Our Scripture text from Exodus this morning speaks directly to the salvation and/or saving of God’s people within the story of the Hebrew people’s first Passover. It is focused directly on God’s love for us today as seen in our redemption through this covenant people, Israel, reaching through the ages to ourselves through Jesus Christ. God’s faithful promise to save all of His children comes to us personally and corporately with this intentional grace in unconditional love.

In our Old Testament scripture this morning we are given one of the first announcements of God’s future plan for everyone founded in Jesus Christ. All of the people of Israel are told by God of their impending doom. God then specifically outlines how to save themselves and their families. The only salvation for their families lies in ONE PERFECT SACRIFICE. Only unleavened bread will be eaten with this sacrifice, a symbol of purity. In addition, they are told to remain in this purity by taking an unblemished lamb from their herd and to prepare it, very specifically, for death. This is initiation of the “paschal lamb” and it will transcend all of time to affirm God’s grace and salvation. The tenth day of the seventh month is the beginning of the agricultural calendar and, prophetically, it is called the Day of Atonement. Indeed, time stands still as God outlines the exact day, the exact month, and the exact method for humanity’s salvation. God establishes a new calendar here and it is rooted in Theology. The Jewish calendar will remain marked for this particular time and event forever. Truly, this day will be celebrated by God’s people in witness and testament. God tells them that the lamb is to be slaughtered and the precious blood is to be swabbed over the portals; both of the uprights and the top of each

doorway. If this isn't followed exactly, according to the words of God, the first born male in each house will die. The message is clear, "The angel of the Lord is near and only the sacrifice will save you." The all important heir for each household will die and thus cut off that family from a future otherwise secured for them within their covenant. The all important male heir to continue the family name is assured only by strict obedience to YAHWEH. Now, all of you ladies stay with me here, this was a paternalistic society and not ready to recognize who really assures and runs the family. To continue, a terribly long and horrible night will find a new dawn with God's people saved from death. The following generations' children will continue to reside in covenant with God. The faithfulness of God will continue to reside only with those that are faithful. "The sacrifice of a lamb is the only ritual that will save us." Their only saving response to God would be their faithful following of the prescribed sacrifice. And notice how God includes the poor, very specifically. The needy and the disenfranchised are included in God's grace. They are to share with each other and pool their resources to find a lamb to receive God's salvation. Indeed, God smote all of the firstborn of Creation not within the sacrifice that terribly long night. Every one was judged, not one was spared. God loved the world enough to save it, even at such a terribly high cost. This terrible cost should serve as an unforgettable reminder of God's total disallowance for sin. God will not condone nor waiver on sin.

Exodus speaks prophetically of the perpetuity of this timeless ritual and remembrance of God's distaste for sin. This ordinance, this celebration, this remembrance is to be followed forever. The roasting of the lamb, instead of boiling it, attests again, prophetically, about the death of God's lamb. Roasting,

as one Commentary attests, “ensures that the blood, the protective element is removed. Blood, the Hebrew symbol of life is divine property and is returned to God, alone.” This night it will protect the people of the Covenant, swabbed around their doors. Importantly, roasting also disallows the breaking of the bone, as it is might when softened by being boiled. None of the bones will be broken. None of the bones will be shattered or abused, as we see the glorious precursor of another sacrifice from God in the future of all of God’s Creation and people. None of his bones will be broken in fulfillment of Scripture, at a future sacrifice. Powerfully, God sets the stage for future faithfulness and for redemption.

As you are reassured to see, our New Testament scripture speaks of this oncoming salvation, as well. It comes, redemption, as the long night recedes. God spared no one to actually save all that would believe and remain faithful. The daytime is now near and with it; we will put on the Light of the world. We will overcome all darkness to receive the New Covenant of God’s grace; Jesus Christ. The light of Christ is our armor against fleshly, sinful pursuits. Changing to armor speaks metaphorically as changing clothes historically meant changing from vices to virtue. God abhors the A-list found in Romans: revelry, debauchery, and licentiousness, quarreling, jealousy. God will not abide any of these pursuits of the flesh. “Here is the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,” as John tells us in the first Chapter of his Gospel. The Lamb of God comes to claim us with his blood. It is swabbed over us as we stand under the portal of the Cross. We celebrate this Passover every time we participate in the Lord’s Supper. The angel of the Lord is near and only this sacrifice will save us.

Indeed, Communion connects us, identified in community with all of God's people over the millennia. With the culmination of the paschal lamb, God offers us salvation as all the people of God remember this sacrifice. Paul uses the term to "wake" as time reflects back to Exodus as a call to moral action in view of time, itself. Awake and act in remembrance of God's loving sacrifice. As Romans says, "Love does no wrong to anyone." The love of God is revealed in the sacrifice of his only Son. God withheld nothing since, only love will fulfill God's Law. As John Calvin said, "the truest test of faith is to love one another." And truly we are called to love one another as God loves us. Jesus reminded us that he came in God's unconditional love, not replace the Law; but to fulfill it. We are to love God and each other and there is not any other path to a future for ourselves or our families. We must continue to respond in gratitude and faith when we eat the bread and drink the cup of God's faithfulness to each of us and to the church, the Body of Christ. We are called to gird up our loins and travel into the Light of the coming day. We walk together with the Holy Spirit in the honesty of the day and not the dishonesty of sin in darkness. We are no longer lambs to the slaughter, but a redeemed people through God's loving grace; Jesus Christ.