

It was a night of quiet joy, a night of wailing sorrow. Chains of slavery were smashed that night in Egypt even as a heavy weight of grief was chained to the hearts of the Egyptians. One house was filled with hope, the next with despair. For Israel the future was born that night. For the Egyptians the future died on that night of the first Passover.

Like when a great war has ended: In one land the victors parade, the air is filled with confetti and streamers and the sounds of brass bands. While in the land of the vanquished survivors sift the rubble for trinkets to remind them of a glory that was once theirs.

Over and over the scene is repeated in human life. After every game there is joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, the height of the one determined by the depth of the other. One crowd will remember and remember and remember, the other ~~crowd~~ will only want to forget.

With our houses and our cars, our jobs and our clothes it is so often the same. My sweater is made more precious by the sweater you don't have, and your envy. Your pain, your sadness, your having it so much tougher than I makes my health so much sweeter, even my pains more bearable.

So it was that Israel remembered that night. The first born sons of their oppressors were struck down. Every beating was avenged, cries for deliverance were answered. God's people were set free. The angel of death passed over them, but visited Pharaoh's palace and ~~to~~ every home and stable of the Egyptians. Israel remembered the night that Egyptians would forever forget. Each year the Israelites remembered with a meal.

For that meal Jesus gathered his disciples. In an upper room they shared the meal their people had eaten on this night for twelve hundred years. But this passover would be different. This night they would not remember the sorrow of the Egyptians, their suffering in grief, but rather Jesus words: "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you

before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat of it until it is fulfilled into the kingdom of God." Then he took the cup that was his, and gave it to them. "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" Jesus went without, that they might be filled.

And he took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." This night they would not remember Egyptians holding their dying son, but their suffering Lord given up to death for them.

And then after supper he gave them the cup saying, "This cup ~~is~~ which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." Jesus blood would be poured out, given to them in the cup which he shared.

The first passover was a meal that divided, a meal that left some of God's creatures singing his praises, but others, the Egyptians cursing the God who had brought such a terrible night upon them. In that night peoples were divided; even to this day Jews and Arabs remain divided.

But in that upper room Christ instituted a new meal of remembering. This time Pharaoh would not be the one holding his dead son, rather the Almighty God would take Pharaoh's place. Pharaoh's son would not pay for the sins and suffering of God's children, God's son would. The angel of death would visit God's own house that the life and freedom of God's children would not come at the expense of any of God's creatures, but at the expense of God. All are welcome to feast as victors here, all given joy here, all forgiven here because *Jesus, God's son, was the one who died* ~~the Lord has laid on Jesus the iniquity~~ ~~of us all.~~

Through what Jesus suffered you have joy tonight. You live because he died, you are freed because he accepted the slavery of the cross. This is not a table that divides, but the table where God is gathering all his children.

One day when all of God's work is complete, there will need be no sorrow that brings another joy, no suffering to win freedom, no death to bring about life. All of God's work will be filled full in the kingdom when we share the cup with Jesus, our brother.

Until that day keep your eyes on Jesus, your ears focused on his word, your hearts full of faith in him as you live, his sisters and brothers in this world. Amen.