

Maundy Thursday –April 17, 2014  
Text: Exodus 12:1-14  
Theme "The Lamb"

**Isaac, the son of Abraham, when he was about to be sacrificed by his father, asked the most pertinent question of our faith.**

**"Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham replied,**

**"God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering my son." And so he did. You remember that Abraham did not have to sacrifice his son that day because God stopped him at the last moment and gave him a ram, caught by his horns in a thicket of thorns. But you also know that even the ram was only a symbol of what was to come, of the Lamb of God, who would wear a crown of thorns.**

**It is strange to me to see how many Christians love to make the Lord's Supper into a symbol. The Lord's Supper is the real thing! Jesus says it as clearly as language can do it. "This IS my body," as he holds up the bread. "This IS my blood," as he holds up the cup of wine. It is the lamb that is the symbol, which is why you see no lamb on the altar tonight. Why would we employ a symbol when we already have the real thing?**

**The lamb is important. The lamb was not randomly selected as the centerpiece for the Passover feast. It wasn't that the Israelites were fresh out of pot roast so God said, "Just use a lamb instead." The lamb was very intentional in the whole system. The lamb would represent the Messiah, the very son of God who would come into this world full of wolves, and he would be sacrificed by those wolves. It would seem as though the wolves had won. God's son, a helpless lamb, could not even avoid being crucified by crooked politicians and immoral priests: wolves.**

**As the lamb had to be perfect because he was the symbol of Christ, so Jesus was perfect in that he had no sin. That is something we cannot imagine. He lived his whole life and never sinned. The lamb for sacrifice at the Passover could not be some leftover crippled runt that was never going to be good for anything. It had to be the pick of the flock, the best the shepherd had to offer. Think of that when you offer your sacrifices to God. Are you giving of the things you have left over, or of the things nobody really wants anyway? Are you setting aside the first fruits, the best of what you are given, for God? Some of you give your first fruits of your time, your abilities and your money, but sadly, no one ever hears from you because you don't see it as a drain, or a duty or a sacrifice. You see it as a blessing from God who has given you the opportunity to do**

**something important for Him. Unfortunately, we usually only hear from the people making excuses for what they don't give, what they don't do. Making sacrifices to God is a huge honor. Serving his Church is an amazing gift. And people who do, know it and are thankful for the opportunity. The lamb was perfect, holy and willing. That is the only kind of sacrifice acceptable to God. That's what Cain discovered in the Garden of Eden when his sacrifice was not acceptable – not because it was not enough but because of the spirit in which he offered it. If you give to God or if you give to others for any reason other than the sheer joy of giving – keep your gift. God doesn't want it. If you give to control people, to be recognized and thanked, or even to sooth your own conscience, keep your gift, for you are to be pitied. If you have something to give, it is only because God gave it to you to manage. It's not yours. It's always God's.**

**The blood of the lamb is important as well. On the first Passover, the blood was painted on the doorframes of the Israelites homes. That blood marked them as one covered by Grace so that God would not strike the firstborn dead during the night. He would "pass over" their homes. Likewise the blood that dripped from Jesus as he hung on the cross we now consume along with the very body that died for us so that his blood quite literally covers us and marks**

**us as children of God who will never suffer death but move from this life to eternal life with God.**

**The lamb was roasted in fire. That too is important. Jesus took the fire of God's wrath for us. This is not a very happy or pleasant thought, roasting in fire. It is very unlike what we do tonight, which *IS* happy and pleasant. We joyfully partake of the reality he created with his life and soul. Unlike the people who celebrated the Passover, no longer do we look forward to a reality that is promised but rather we look back on a reality that came to pass on Good Friday. Tonight we gather on the day of the institution of the Lord's Supper and celebrate our salvation with the meal the Lord gave to us before he went to the cross.**

**The lamb. "Where is the lamb," Isaac asked his father. "God will provide the lamb," his father said and so he has.**