

Sermon 2012 Maundy Thursday  
Text: Luke 22:7-20  
Theme: "His Blood"

**Usually, blood is not a good sign. When my boys were little and there was a scream from the backyard I always asked the same question, "Is there blood?" If the answer was yes, I went to see what had happened. If it was no, I would just wait for the next scream. From the time we are little, we are taught that blood is a bad thing. From skinned knees to bloody noses to paper cuts, we understand that blood shows that somehow we have hurt ourselves badly enough to compromise that protective layer of skin that surrounds us. Blood is not a good sign.**

**This was not always so. In the Old Testament blood was a sign of God's love and forgiveness. He accepted the blood of an animal to pay for our sins. Their blood substituted for our blood. In fact, when Jesus and the disciples gathered around a table on the Thursday before Jesus was crucified, it was to celebrate an event in which blood was a very good sign. They were about to eat the feast of the Passover. Passover was the holy day when God's people gathered together to celebrate what God had done for his people long ago in Egypt.**

**God's people had been in slavery to the Egyptians for four hundred years and God had sent Moses to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to**

**let the Hebrews leave to go back to their ancestral home. You may recall that Pharaoh was less than interested in letting his free labor force leave. God sent 9 plagues to help persuade him to listen: Blood, Frogs Gnats, Flies, Dead livestock, Boils, Hail, Locusts and Darkness. Pharaoh did not listen. Finally, God passed over the land and killed the first born of every Egyptian family and herd. That did the trick.**

**God told the Hebrews to eat a special meal that night to prepare for what he would do. They were told to eat bread with no yeast, to show that God was acting quickly to bring them out of slavery and there was no time for waiting for yeast to work. They were to sacrifice a lamb and the blood of that lamb was to be painted over the doorposts of their houses as a sign that this was a house of God's people and they were not harmed. Blood was celebrated that night for by the blood of the lamb, they were saved.**

**For more than one thousand years, God's people celebrated that night every year by eating the same kind of meal. This is what Jesus was doing on this very night almost 2,000 years ago.**

**"Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.' They said to him, 'Where will you have us prepare it?' He said to**

**them, 'Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.' And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover."**

**This Passover was just like all the ones before, except at this Passover feast, Jesus says something the world had not heard before:**

**"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." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."**

**All through Lent, during the midweek services, we've been talking about our savior's wounded body. Tonight we talk about his blood.**

**The disciples would be seeing a lot of his blood in the next 24 hours. Just after eating the Passover, the disciples went with Jesus up onto the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. There, Jesus prayed to God the Father. As he was praying, he was in such**

**mental and spiritual agony as he faced the certainty of going to hell that Luke tells us he was sweating “great drops of blood.” This is a medical condition that we know can indeed happen if someone is under a great deal of stress. After the men came to arrest Jesus, they began to mock him and beat him. The disciples would have seen his blood again. Later, when they dragged Jesus before Herod, that thorny crown was pushed down onto his head, cutting into his skin. When the trials were over, they laid the cross on his back, which was torn by the whips and the scourges. The disciples saw the nails pierce his wrists. They saw his body pierced by a spear. The disciples saw a lot of Jesus’ blood in those few hours. It was the blood that they had betrayed. It was the blood they had denied. It was the blood they sinned against...it is the blood WE sin against.**

**A scraped knee or a paper cut stings. Blood is usually a sign of bad news. When the disciples saw the blood of Jesus, they surely thought of this as bad news, but only because they’d failed to grasp the sign of the Passover, the sign of the blood that saved God’s people from death. They forgot the words Jesus himself had spoken to them the night before they saw his blood. He said, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” When they saw his blood, they were not seeing him cut from falling off a skateboard or mishandling a knife while slicing a bagel; they were**

**seeing the new covenant being poured out for them. In the blood of Jesus, we see the forgiveness of our sins. The lamb of the Passover pointed forward to a sacrifice that would be once and for all. Jesus was that sacrificial lamb.**

**Now he invites us to that same table with the disciples, where he says to us, "This is my body, which is given for you. . . . This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." Jesus is the same one who spoke in the beginning of all time and said, "Let there be light," and there was light. He created the fish, the birds, the stars, the planets, and the whole universe with nothing but his word. This is the same one who stood at the wedding of Cana and changed water into finely aged wine. The same one who has done such great things through words sat at this table and said, "This is my body." With this bread and this wine, we have the body and blood of Jesus. We know it because Jesus does it. Whatever God says he does, he does.**

**Blood is usually the sign of a bad thing, but when you see his blood, when you hear about his wounds and the blood he shed this week, remember, this blood...his blood... is life for you. This blood is the forgiveness we desperately need. We can have complete forgiveness in no other way. This is his lifeblood that he gives to us. His lifeblood...given for you.**