

Maundy Thursday C, 2010

Text: Luke 22:7-20

Title: What Jesus Wants

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Lots of people want things from Jesus- they want healing, they want justice, they want power, they want glory.

Very rarely does Jesus ever want anything from anyone else. Only three times in the gospels does it say that Jesus ever wanted or desired anything. In the first part of Mark, Jesus wants certain men to be His disciples. In our gospel lesson for tonight, Jesus wants to celebrate the Passover with His disciples. And in John, in the Last Supper prayers, Jesus says that He wants His disciples to be with Him and to see His glory.

Of the three- the strongest possible language is here, in tonight's gospel. Jesus uses the word "desire" twice. Literally, "I have desired this desire." And the word "desire" is so strong, it's usually used for sinful desires like lusting and coveting. That's how badly Jesus wants this.

So of all the things that Jesus wants, He wants this one thing most of all. This is His strongest desire- to eat the Passover with His disciples.

It's Jesus' last night, the last few moments with His disciples. And the only thing that He wants to do is to eat the Passover meal with them. It's His dying wish.

Think about your life- everything that you've done, all that you've accomplished, the highlights of your life thus far. If you knew that you would die tomorrow, if you knew that tonight would be your last night on earth, what would you want to do? Where would you go? Who would you see? How would you spend your last night on earth?

Would you go on a huge shopping spree, and blow your savings on something wild and fun?

Would you want to be alone with your thoughts and memories?

Or would you want to have one more nice, quiet meal with your family.

Jesus chooses the last option. It's His last night. He can do anything that He wants, and He wants to eat the Passover with His disciples. That's what Jesus wants most of all.

Now it's a little strange that He's eating this meal with the disciples. You see, they're not related.

The Passover meal was a family meal. It was eaten around the family table, in the family home. It's strange for Jesus not to be eating this meal with His mother and His brothers and His sisters.

But the disciples are Jesus' new family. They are the ones who do the will of His Father. They are His brothers.

The disciples are not Jesus' family by birth, but He chose them to be His new family.

Jesus made some interesting choices when He chose His disciples- a bunch of fishermen, a tax collector, a religious zealot; men who argued and doubted and disappointed Jesus on a regular basis. Of the twelve, one would betray him and one would deny him, they would fall asleep when He needed them most, and abandon him in death.

But these are the folks that Jesus wants to eat His last supper with. These are the folks that Jesus loves and even serves. Jesus' one last desire, His dying wish is to eat the Passover with them one last time.

The Passover was no ordinary meal. It was the meal of liberation, the meal of freedom, the meal of salvation.

In the Passover, the people of Israel relived their rescue from slavery in Egypt. Every part of the meal had special significance.

There was the lamb- male, perfect, in the prime of his life. It had been sacrificed and the blood of the lamb marked their door to keep death away.

There was the unleavened bread- made without yeast, because there was no time for it to rise. No time to waste, for tomorrow we leave for the Promised Land.

There was the wine- the drink of joy and freedom, celebrating the bounty of their new home.

In this meal, the people of Israel passed once more from death to life, from slavery to freedom. They remembered how the Lord had spared their firstborn sons, taking instead the life of a lamb in their place.

Tonight, this very night is the night of the new Passover.

Tonight Jesus gathers once more with you, His new family, His disciples, to celebrate once more this meal of meals.

His family, his disciples are those whom He has chosen, adopted through Holy Baptism. You are His new family, gathered once more around the table to eat the family meal.

You are an odd lot of people- old and young, rich and poor, healthy and infirm- but sinners all. You have all denied him and abandoned him along the way. And yet for some reason Jesus wants to eat with You. It's His dying wish.

This meal is a new Passover. In this meal we pass from slavery to freedom, from death to life. This is the meal of our salvation.

There is the bread, Jesus' own body. Bread for the journey, bread eaten in haste, because tomorrow we leave for the Promised Land.

There is the wine of rejoicing, Jesus' own blood. Wine to celebrate the freedom and victory won for us by our champion.

And there is the lamb, male, perfect, in the prime of His life, the firstborn and beloved of His Father, given now in the place of all. Jesus, here in His body and blood.

This is Jesus' last night. Tomorrow He dies. And He has one wish, one fervent desire, one thing that He wants more than anything else.

Jesus wants to share this new Passover with you, His family, to eat and drink once more and to relive your salvation.