

I Have Earnestly Desired

Luke 22:14-18 | Oct. 17, 2020 | Bryce Beale

The Oxford professor and theologian of the last century, C.S. Lewis, once made this argument: “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exist.”¹

When you were only one day old, you by instinct craved milk. You did not even know there was such a thing as milk in the world, yet you craved it. You were created with a craving that corresponded to something in the world. Ducks are born with a desire to swim, before they even know there is such a thing as a lake to swim in.

In almost every case, when we find a desire within ourselves, there is some way to satisfy that desire in this world. What then are we to do when we find, among all our other desires, a great dissatisfaction, a longing for something more than this life can provide? Lewis answered like this: “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”²

You were made for another world.

You may think of your life on earth like a book—we speak of turning the next page, or beginning a new chapter of life. But if your life in this world is a book, then you are only in the preface, in the front matter. You haven’t even begun the first chapter. We are in a prelude, an introduction, nothing more.³ Things here introduce and point us forward to the realer, fuller experiences that are still to come hereafter.

Think of the patriarchs who stood at the root of Israel. They were called away from their home with nothing but a promise of something better to come, which they never received in this life. So we read of them in Hebrews 11,

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it

¹ *Mere Christianity*, ch. 10.

² *Mere Christianity*, ch. 10.

³ I draw this idea also from C.S. Lewis, at the very end of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.⁴

That city is nowhere to be found in this world—it exists in the world to come, the world which Jesus will bring when he returns to make all things new. That is the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem which will descend from heaven; and only there, in that new world, in that new city, will the deepest of your desires ever be satisfied.

God has not intended, when you find yourself again and again dissatisfied by this life, to make you merely miserable. He means to convince you that the best is yet to come, to keep you from settling down here or returning to the idolatry of your old country.

The tragedy of that person who never trusts in Christ is that he will never have the thirst of his soul quenched, he will never drink of the river of life in the New Jerusalem, never feel her innate craving satisfied. But the hope of all here who have trusted in Christ is that you will one day have the joy that your smaller happinesses have all pointed toward. You will move into the first chapter of your life, and there you will be satisfied.

Our Savior lived his life consistent with the fact that this world is temporary and is not the main event. The greatest joys are reserved for the city still to come—and for Jesus, this was a strong comfort.

You see this, for example, in our text today as we begin to witness the Last Supper of our Lord.

LUKE 22:14-18

We call this moment the “Last Supper”—but as you can see, that title is not exactly correct. Jesus is eager to eat this Passover meal with his disciples precisely because it is *not* his last supper. He will eat this meal again when he returns to earth.

⁴ Vv. 13-16 (ESV).

And he is glad to eat it now as a foretaste of that coming feast, even though the agony of death stood between his present meal and the meal to come.

Because those two meals are the focus of our text, they will also be the focus of this sermon. First, we will consider the present Passover that Jesus eats with his disciples; but then, secondly, we will look forward with our Savior to that meal he longs for most, the Passover he will partake of in the kingdom when he returns. There is the present Passover, and the Passover to come. Let us see them both in our text.

Present Passover

First then, see the present Passover in the text. Luke provides several details concerning this famous meal of Jesus and the Twelve.

The first detail he provides is the time: “And when the hour came.” This would be late afternoon or evening on Thursday of the passion week, the time for the northern pilgrims in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover meal.

Next, we are told the setting of the event: “he reclined at table.” Though the Passover when first instituted required men and women to eat standing up and ready to leave at any moment, in commemoration of the Hebrews’ quick deparation out of Egypt, over time that custom shifted. Now the celebrants recline on cushions, their feet outward and their heads toward the low table in their middle.

Then appear the participants of the meal: “and the apostles with him.” The other gospels call these men the “Twelve,” but Luke reminds us that these twelve (minus Judas) will be the earliest leaders of Christ’s church. They are the only capital-A Apostles, sent out by Christ with unique authority. And all of them, along with Judas the betrayer, are reclining with Jesus for this Paschal meal.

These three details introduce us to the supper at hand: the time is evening, their posture is reclining, and the participants are the Twelve and Jesus.

With these details in mind, we are then ready to consider this present Passover itself. What would a Passover meal in Jesus’ day look like? What did this Passover meal look like?

From outside sources we learn that the Passover meal proceeded like this:

The person leading the meal begins by offering a prayer to God. Then those present drink the first of four cups of wine; the first cup is called the cup of blessing. A ritual handwashing follows, and then the eating of bitter herbs in memory of the bitter slavery of Israel under the Egyptian whip. Next the group sings the first two Hallel Psalms, which are Psalms 113 and 114, and drinks the second cup. The meaning of the Passover is subsequently explained, and then the meal of the Passover lamb and unleavened bread would be eaten. Then comes the third cup, then the rest of the Hallel Psalms, and finally the fourth cup.⁵

We may wonder which cup Jesus puts before his Twelve in verse 17, “And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks...”

We do not know for certain, but it seems to be the very first, the cup of blessing—after all, Paul speaks of the cup we drink in communion, which is based upon this supper, the “cup of blessing.”⁶ And Luke alone of all the accounts concerning this Last Supper mentions two cups, the one in this verse, and then the one in verse 20: “And likewise [he took] the cup after they had eaten.” That cup would probably be the third of the four, since it was taken after the meal.

The first and third cups of four, then, are probably the two Jesus has chosen to use in instituting the Lord’s Supper for us. And in our text the first is in view.

Notice lastly that the first cup is a single cup distributed among all the disciples, rather than separate cups. Jesus tells them in verse 17, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves.” The Last Supper represents among many other things the unity of God’s people. And so Jesus chooses to pass around one cup—this was pre-Covid of course—to illustrate the oneness of those who drink the one cup.

⁵ This wording is mine, but I draw the information from John MacArthur, *Luke 18-24*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 280.

⁶ 1 Cor. 10:16.

Future Passover

These are the details of the present Passover. But they are not actually the focus of the few verses before us this morning. For just as Jesus in the last chapter had his sight fixed on his future return, so here the same occupies his mind. The Passover he now partakes of is important and pleasant to him because it is a shadow of the greater Passover, the one that he will enjoy in his kingdom when it comes.

So we must move now from the present Passover to the Passover to come. What does Jesus tell us of that greater event?

See verse 15: “And he said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’” We naturally wonder why Jesus “desired with desire,” as the Greek has it, to eat this meal with the Twelve. After all, his horrible death looms over the whole occasion, enough to ruin any meal for most of us. Yet Jesus is eager to enjoy this meal—why?

He answers our question himself in the next verse: “For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” He craves this Passover *because* it is the final Passover he will eat until he eats it again in the kingdom of God. Though this is the eve of misery for our Savior, yet also in the meal itself is prefigured the reward of all his suffering.

“When his soul makes an offering for guilt,” foretold Isaiah, “he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied.”⁷ Or again in Hebrews we read that Jesus “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.”⁸

Jesus knew that though the dark hillside was his destination on the following day, yet that darkness would not be the end—it, meaning all that God had foretold through the prophets concerning the happy resolution of the world, would be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And the very next time he reclined for this Passover, it would be in the kingdom, when all was fulfilled.

Consider what Jesus considers on this evening, what makes him view this Last Supper as an appetizer, merely whetting his appetite for the full course to come. He says he will not eat the

⁷ Is. 53:10-11.

⁸ Heb. 12:2.

Passover meal again “until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” What is contained in that word, “it”? Or in other words, what is fulfilled when as he puts it in verse 18, “the kingdom of God comes”?

Everything.⁹

The hopes of God’s people through all time, their aching desire with all creation for their adoption as sons, the redemption of their bodies. Every word of promise that passed the lips of a prophet will be fulfilled.

The words of Isaiah shall be fulfilled:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD’s hand
double for all her sins.¹⁰

Her warfare has not ended yet—but it will end.

The words of Micah shall be fulfilled:

It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and it shall be lifted up above the hills;
and peoples shall flow to it,
and many nations shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,

⁹ While technically the fulfillment of all things will happen in two stages—the millennial reign of Christ on earth and then the new heavens and earth—I am here speaking of the end in a compressed way, as consisting of both stages.

¹⁰ Is. 40:1.

and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore;
but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig
tree,
and no one shall make them afraid,
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.¹¹

Jeremiah's predictions too shall have their fulfillment:

And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and foreigners shall no more make a servant of him. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.¹²

Ezekiel foretold a future rebuilding of Jerusalem and of the temple in detail and then concluded his book of prophecy with these words: "the name of the city from that time on shall be, 'The LORD Is There.'" He will not be disappointed.

The nation of Israel shall receive her promises, and we the Gentiles shall be blessed through her, by our connection to her as wild olive branches. Jesus already said as much when he was rebuking those Jews who rejected him, in chapter 13 of Luke: "[you will] see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God."¹³

This was God's plan from the beginning of time, and Jesus at this final meal before his death longs for the next time he will partake of the Passover, when this plan has reached its fulfillment. He yearns for the day when God's promise of an everlasting kingdom under the rule of the Davidic Messiah will be fulfilled.

The next time Jesus eats the Passover, the next time he tastes of wine, it will be in the kingdom when all this has been fulfilled. It will be in the millennial kingdom, the first part of the restoration of all things.

¹¹ Micah 4:1-4.

¹² Jer. 30:8-9.

¹³ Vv. 28-29.

When you and I partake of communion, the Lord's Supper, as we do each month in this local body, we remember many things. But among those many things, we remember what Jesus' longed for on the night he instituted this supper. We remember his return, the fulfillment and the consummation of all things, the coming kingdom and all its promises.

After Paul recounts the events of our text, he concludes in this way in 1 Corinthians 11:26: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death *until he comes*."¹⁴

When we take the bread and the cup, we look back to the death of our Savior, and we look forward to his return. In essence, we sit here in history between the two Passovers of Christ—the one he partakes of now in our text, and the next one he will partake of when he comes again in his kingdom. And we remember them both, we celebrate them both!

We eat our bread at table with the suffering Savior of this present Passover, and we mourn for his agonies, the death he suffered for our souls, to spare us the angel of death and to deliver us from bondage. But then he reaches out his hand to dry our tears, for we are also with him at table in his kingdom, where there is no longer death or mourning or pain or doubt or sin or struggle. Here we are between the two events, proclaiming his death in the past until he comes in the future.

Conclusion

And so I must conclude this message with what we heard at Jesus' table in Luke 14, from someone sitting there: "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

The life we all live now, though it may seem to be all there is since it is all we know, is in fact a mere preface. Those who are older can attest to how brief this life is, and how quickly it passes. But we do not mourn the quick passing of the years, for every tick of the clock brings us closer to the meal that we, like our Savior, earnestly desire to eat.

We have been fooling with appetizers only—the happiest moments you have had in this world, the most satisfying experiences, are not even the first course of the meal proper.

¹⁴ Emphasis mine.

They are only meant to whet your appetite, to make you eager for the real food that will be brought to the table soon.

But do not forget this one fact: only those who partake of the first Passover with Jesus will also partake of the second. If you wish to eat and drink at table in the kingdom when it comes, you must sit down at the table with Jesus now, before it comes. You must eat his body and drink his blood—you must by faith partake of Christ in the inner person.

It is not enough even to partake of the elements of bread and drink at communion—contrary to the opinions of some, these elements do not of themselves confer grace upon the soul. These only benefit you if you partake of them with faith in Christ. Faith is the key thing.

If you believe in Christ, if you receive him and his words into your soul, if you cease resisting this Davidic ruler but bow before his omnipotent reign and take your place at his first Passover of suffering, you will have a place reserved for you at table in the kingdom.

If you will believe in Christ even now, if you will sit with him and embrace his body and blood broken and spilled for sinners, then here is the promise of blessing, written by John at the command of an angel and unchangeable: “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”¹⁵

And I say with that angel, “These are the true words of God.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Rev. 19:9.

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