

Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14, 1Corinthians 11:23-26 and John 13: 1-7, 31b-35.

In both Exodus and Corinthians we have an event taking place set around a meal, two quite similar events but also very different. In the first we find the Israelites preparing a Passover meal, they are given strict instructions by God on how to prepare for and execute the eating of this meal. In Corinthians we have a group of close friends sitting down to eat. Jesus the Son of God is instituting the eating of a meal, he is giving instructions on how this meal should be prepared and then eaten. Jesus's instructions are not as in depth as those of his father but never the less they are instructions. Both these meals are being prepared and eaten as a form of celebration that has a dark twist. In the Exodus reading the meal is to celebrate the Israelites freedom from the land of Egypt, but more than that it is their reward for believing in a God who set them free from the slavery of sin. The darkness comes from the first born child being killed unless there was blood daubed on the lintels and doorposts, for those who shed the blood of the lamb and did this their firstborn child would live. In Corinthians again we have the image of the lamb. This time the lamb is in the form of a human being, Jesus the son of God. He is showing his friends how they should share bread and wine in remembrance of him their friend. In this narrative the darkness comes from the fact that Jesus is preparing for his own death so that we can be freed from our sinful bodies. The meal Jesus was sharing with his friends was a re-enactment of what his forefathers had done at the feast of the Passover, which is described in the Exodus reading. When we celebrate the Eucharistic meal, we too are re-enacting, not just what Jesus did with his own disciples, but weaving the events leading up to the death of Jesus into our own history. A history that we like the Israelites can tell future generations, so that they too can be saved from the sin of death

How many of you were silently singing a new commandment when we reached the end of the gospel reading, I know I was. It is this commandment that we struggle with the most. Love one another just as I have loved you. Jesus loved all people, regardless of their gender, skin colour and what they did for a living. Even in the cases of those who sinned, Jesus told them that by their faith they were forgiven. Jesus loved everyone equally and died for all. How many of us can claim the same. Yes we may say we are prepared to die for our children, grandchildren and in some cases our husband or wife, but what about a stranger? What about someone who we know has sinned? Are we and can we be prepared to die for them, or do we say they don't deserve our love never mind us giving up our lives for them. During the many conflicts that there have been people have given up their own lives so that we can be free to live our lives, in most cases in relative comfort. Aid workers risk their lives to help those in need so why aren't we prepared to do the same? One argument is that these people choose to risk their lives, so if death happens that's part of the risk they take. Jesus didn't have a choice, he may not have wanted to die, he may have even wished that the burden could be lifted from him, but he knew this had to happen, he had no choice his death was inevitable. Could Jesus's death have been prevented, I don't see how unless the people requested it, but like most of us they didn't realise how good things were and could have been until they lost it. Even though Jesus knew that his death was imminent he did one last act of servitude, he untied his robe and washed his disciples feet, a sign of his own humility and a sign to the church today that we will be washed clean by his precious blood that was spilt for us.

Amen