

**MAUNDY THURSDAY**  
***Our Passover, Our Exodus***

April 9, 2009  
Pastor Michael Cofer

Welcome to the upper room. Have a seat. As you well know it is the Passover, and we have come together to celebrate that very thing... that pivotal moment in our history when God through Moses led our forefathers out of the land of Egypt.

You all remember the story, I know, but it feels so good to tell it. So maybe you'll indulge me for a minute. The Israelites, our people, were slaves to the Egyptians: forced to break their backs making and carrying the massive bricks that pharaoh demanded of them for his monument to himself.

And maybe they could have put up with their lot in life if that was as bad as it got, but the thing that made it intolerable – the last straw, as it were – is that their slavery made it impossible for them to have the kind of relationship with God that they needed. They couldn't worship Him the way He deserved.

So God (using Moses as His spokesman) sets into motion the plan that we all call the exodus. Plague after plague, just hammering on pharaoh and the Egyptians. But their hearts were hard until the final plague: the killing of the first born. The night of the Passover, the angel of death went from house to house killing the first born of every family – even in pharaoh's palace. The only way to be spared from this fate was to smear the blood of a slaughtered lamb on your doorpost. The angel of death would see that and pass-over that house, sparing everyone within.

That night, pharaoh was broken, and God's people were finally set free. And that's what we are here to celebrate: our freedom from slavery and our being spared from death by the blood of the lamb.

But, Christ has forever changed this night for us. Our scope is not merely the history of God's people, but it encompasses we who are here tonight. We don't deny or discard the former significance of this feast, but rather it is amplified, it is magnified, it is clarified, it is personalized, it is immediate and imminent.

While the meal was going on, Jesus picked up the bread. It was probably a flat, crispy bread – not unlikely a large cracker. Anyways, he picked up the bread, and blessed it, and broke it. That was all normal. That was a traditional part of the Passover. But then Jesus said those words that forever changed the breaking of the bread.

He held that bread up – broken and in pieces – and said to them, **“Take and eat. This is My Body.”** Now, I think it's safe to assume that when Jesus said that, his disciples had no idea what that was supposed to mean. Seriously, that bread is His Body? Still though, the image is striking. And as they passed the bread around, each of them took their turn breaking it – breaking His Body.

The eating of unleavened bread is an essential part of the Passover meal because that was what the Israelites ate the night they fled from Egypt. It is unleavened bread that gave them the strength and nourishment they needed

as they made the journey into the desert. And this is NOT the first time Jesus has called Himself bread. He had previously referred to Himself as the bread of life: a direct reference to the manna eaten by the Israelites as they crossed the wilderness up till the moment they entered the Promised Land.

After the bread had been distributed, Jesus took up a cup of wine and blessed it. Again, all of that was traditional, but then he said the unthinkable, **“This is My Blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many.”** If the Passover blood is Jesus' blood, then who is the Passover Lamb? It is Jesus himself. His blood marks us and death passes over us as well.

Everyone needs an exodus. Sure we were not slaves to pharaoh or any man. But we were slaves to sin. We labored day and night, breaking our backs to satisfy our misguided hearts and corrupt minds. And it kept us from the relationship with God that we so desperately needed. When we were slaves to sin, the worship of God was quite impossible.

The paradoxical thing about slavery to sin is that we are in a sense our own jailors, and yet we are powerless to free ourselves. And that's why God has to do something drastic. That's why Jesus, the Lamb of God, has to be slain. Nothing else can do it.

So as we approach his table, as we partake of his Body and his Blood mysteriously and miraculously present in the simple means of bread and wine, let us come in gratitude for the freedom Christ won for us. We who are gathered

at the table must never lose sight of the sacrifice that made this feast for us a reality and not merely a remembrance.

We pray:

**Lord Jesus Christ**, we barely understand the meaning of Your words: "This is My body" and "This is My blood," but we believe them, and we put our trust in the strength and nourishment they provide. We put our confidence in your deliverance. We cherish the sacrifice you made for us. Grant that we may always receive You with grateful and faithful heart until we reach the goal of our exodus: Life Eternal with You in the Promised Land. In Your precious and holy name we pray. **AMEN.**