

When difficulty hits us hard... sometimes... even the most **faithful** follower of Christ... will struggle with **doubts** about God's love. ... In his book *Doubting*... author Alister McGrath shared the following story to illustrate a means for **knowing** and remembering the reality of love:

“An aunt of mine died some time ago, having lived to be 80 or so. She had never married. During the course of clearing out her possessions, we came across a battered old photograph of a young man. My aunt had, it turned out, fallen hopelessly in love as a young girl. It had ended tragically. She never loved anyone else and kept a photograph of the man she had loved for the remainder of her life.

Why? Partly to remind herself that she had once been loved by someone. As she had grown old, she knew that she would have difficulty believing that, at one point in her life, she really had meant something to someone—that someone had once cared for her and regarded her as his everything. It could all have seemed a dream, an illusion, something she had invented in her old age to console her in her declining years—except that the photograph gave the lie to that.

It reminded her that it had not been invented; she really loved someone once and was loved in return. The photograph was her sole link to a world in which she had been valued.”

The “last Supper” that Jesus shared with His disciples... and then asked you and I to regularly observe as we take communion... are **like** that photograph. They reassure us that something which seems too good to be true — something that we might even be suspected of having invented — really **did** happen.

The gospel, itself, is **too** good to be true!

Here's the gospel: you're more sinful than you ever dared believe; you're more loved than you ever dared hope. (Those are Pastor Tim Keller's

words... and they are very **true** aren't they...?) ... You're more sinful than you ever dared believe; you're more loved than you ever dared hope.

The Lord's Supper and communion remind us of this... and here is something else... that is **hard** sometimes for us to remember... but it also happens to be central to the Last Supper and our remembrance of it... when we take communion:

You don't live in a random world ruled by chance; you live in a world ruled by the God of Exodus and Easter.

This morning... in our study through the Gospel of Luke... we come to the event known as the "Last Supper." ... Just before Jesus suffers and goes to the Cross... He has His last meal with His disciples. ... This meal is **so full** of emotion! (In one of the verses we will be looking at... verse 15... Jesus expresses how **much** He had been looking forward to having this meal with them. Literally... He says... "*I have desired with desire... .. to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*"... and He said it like this... to make the point **emphatically**.)

This would be Jesus' **parting words** to them. ... Like an ill person on his deathbed... Jesus is about to leave His **last** impressions on those who are to carry out His work for Him on Earth. This is His last testament.

So... as we study these verses today... keep a watchful eye on how these two principles shine through:

You're more sinful than you ever dared believe; you're more loved than you ever dared hope.

You don't live in a random world ruled by chance; you live in a world ruled by the God of Exodus and Easter.

I will mark for you the **second** of these two principles - first

Luke 22:7-13

Just as God had an **exact** time for the slaying of the Passover Lamb in the wilderness... so He had an **exact** time for the slaying of His final Passover Lamb. When Matthew recorded this same event... Matthew puts it a little more forthright...

Matthew 26:18 (ESV)

*He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, **My time is at hand**. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.' "*

The death of Christ was under complete **control** of God – every detail!
Jesus said, "My time is at hand."

Peter would write some thirty years later...

1 Peter 1:18-20 (ESV)

knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you

(Isn't that amazing?!) ... God's unblemished Lamb had planned to be sacrificed for the sin of the world... **before** its foundation. ... And now Jesus tells His men... "*The time has come... the time is at hand... the time that I've known about since before the world was made... is right **now**...*"

You don't live in a random world ruled by chance; you live in a world ruled by the God of Exodus and Easter.

We can also see this in the **instructions** that Jesus gave to Peter and John... (two of His closest disciples.) ... It is clear that Jesus had made some **arrangements** for the upper room several days earlier. ... He did this **privately**... knowing the human and spiritual forces were out to destroy Him. ... Jesus knew... and a few verses later... He reveals to Judas that He knew... about the arrangements Judas had made with the religious leaders for Jesus' quiet arrest... away from the crowds who might riot.

The counterintelligence-like secrecy was due to the fact that Jesus was quite **aware** of Judas' intention to betray Him... at a time when He and the disciples were isolated. ... If Jesus had let it be known where the rendezvous and meal would occur... Judas would have **informed** the religious leaders who were waiting and ready to pounce... the meal would never have taken place... and the institution of the Lord's Supper would never have been given to the Church.

So... apparently... Jesus Himself had **prearranged** the place and the secret signs by which Peter and John would find it. ... By the way... **women** normally carried water jars... and they carried them on top of their heads. ... It would have been very **unusual** to see a man carrying a water jar... men carried water in skins. ... So this was a **clear** sign... their guide was easily recognizable among the crowded and swollen streets of Jerusalem during the busy festival.

Everything went like clockwork: "They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover." The householder led them to a large room above his home "all furnished"—literally, "spread," indicating that the reclining mats were arranged and spread out on the floor.

Jesus' two most trusted disciples hurried off to purchase a lamb and all the trimmings for the feast... They would need to bring the lamb to the Temple and have a priest sacrifice it... Then they would roast the lamb over a fire on a pomegranate stick for the meal... light the candles... then wait for Jesus and the others.

From the onset of this near-final event we see that Jesus was in **control** of His destiny. ... He was not caught like a rag doll on the relentless gears of history. ... He was **not** - *done in* - by a satanic plot. ... Jesus would accomplish **everything** He set out to do — and on **His Own** schedule.

When the timing was perfect... the Lord sent Peter and John to do all the busy work.

At midafternoon... 3:00 P.M. ... the ritual slaughtering began. A priest in the Temple had to officiate the process. Because there were so many Jews gathering in Jerusalem at this time... the ritual slaughtering had to be completed in three huge shifts... one every hour.

So at 3:00 sharp the Temple gates would open long enough for the courts to fill with as many people as it could hold... then the gates would close and take care of the first group. ... A priest's shofar played a sustained blast... and the sacrifices beganThe priests would form two long

columns and pilgrims were to approach the first available priests standing before them and holding a basin of either silver or gold. ... Each Israelite would come to a priest and slaughter his own animal... and the priest would catch the blood in the basin... which he would then walk over and toss at the base of the altar... As the worshipper left the temple... the slain lamb and its skin was draped either over his shoulder... or carried by two men on a pole. Peter and John probably carried theirs on a pole... as they walked through the streets... among thousands of others doing the same as them... while looking for the strange sight of a man carrying a jar of water on his head. And they found everything just as Jesus had told them; and they prepared the Passover"

Once they arrived they would have built a fire and arranged to roast the lamb before twilight. ... They would have set the table... then along with every Jewish household in Jerusalem... they would have waited for sunset and the sound of the silver trumpets from the temple as a signal to begin the Passover.

You don't live in a random world ruled by chance; you live in a world ruled by the God of Exodus and Easter.

Jesus was in full control of His death... and His last meal with His disciples.

Now... for the other principle... lets observe... You're more sinful than you ever dared believe; you're more loved than you ever dared hope. We see this in verses 14-20... where we see the willingness of the Lamb of God to be sacrificed:

Luke 22:14-20

The Lord and His disciples entered the house on Thursday evening after sundown... went upstairs... and reclined on mats around table that was inches off the floor. ... **Outside** the upper room... were our Lord's enemies plotting to kill him. ... **Inside** the upper room... were apostles... who would within hours... betray... deny... and forsake Him. ... He had told His disciples on many occasions... that He would have to suffer for the sins of humanity... and yet with a heart of love... He could look at His honored guest on His left – Judas - and these other eleven men and say, "*I have earnestly desired (with desire) to eat this Passover with you before I suffer...*"

Jesus then went on to say, "*...I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*" ... I think that we are supposed to notice that Jesus was not **just** looking at the cross. ... In those moments His thoughts included you and I... Jesus knew that all who would place their faith in Him as their Savior... would actually dine with Him in His earthly kingdom one day. Our Lord was looking at that feast... which you and I will be part of.

Then... according to John 13:4-5... the Messiah became the servant of all who were present... ... **including Judas!** ... Our Lord "*...rose from supper, and laid aside His garments, and taking a towel, He wrapped Himself in it like the lowest of all servants. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet...*" This was a hygienic and **social** need... but Jesus used it as a **symbol**.

The traditional roles of master and servant were well-defined... and for a master to serve his own servants... in such a lowly task... was **unthinkable**. ... Yet Jesus enacted this dramatic reversal in washing the

feet of his servants as an example for all **future** disciples to follow... in regularly **servicing** one another. ... Jesus wants His followers to love one another in the same way we see Him loving those men that evening. And it isn't just those... who we think **like** us... that we are to serve. ... Jesus washed the feet of **Judas** – knowing what Judas was about to do.

The final Passover meal became the first “Lord's Supper.” ... Today we abbreviate the Passover meal... when we celebrate communion. ... But in a **traditional** Passover meal... once everyone was in place around the low-to-the-ground table... leaning on an elbow on top of a mat... the host would lift the first cup of wine... the Wine of Sanctification (*Kiddush*). The purpose of the Kiddush... was to acknowledge that this meal is different than all other meals of the year. ... The host would offer a prayer of thanksgiving... and then everyone would drink the wine.

As another prayer was offered... each person would wash their hands. Then each would take some parsley and dip it in salt water. ...The parsley stood for the hyssop the Jews used to put the blood on the door posts... and the salt water symbolized the bitter tears of the Jews while they were in Egypt. ...Then the roasted lamb... unleavened bread... and bitter herbs would be placed on the table. ... The host would take the unleavened bread and break it... handing some to each person to remind the family of God's daily provision.

The host would lift the second cup of wine... the Cup of Explaining or Proclaiming (*Haggadah*). ... Everyone would wash their hands again and then sing the praise Psalms 113-114... followed by another benediction. The host would offer a sop of lamb and unleavened bread dipped in bitter

herbs to each person in turn. ...Then all would eat freely and once again wash their hands.

It was probably while they were eating that Jesus said out of a heart of love and warning in the presence of Judas...

John 13:18 (ESV)

I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'

Now the disciple who was located **closest** to Jesus... reclining on the mat directly in front of where Jesus was laying... leaned over his shoulder (probably for a **private** discussion between **only** he and Jesus.)

John 13:25-26 (ESV)

So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

So now it is **three** people in the room who know what is going on: Jesus... Judas... and the disciple who leaned back and asked. Many scholars believe that disciple was John.

Matthew 26:25 (ESV)

Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."

John 13:27, 30 (ESV)

²⁷ *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."* ³⁰ *So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.*

Judas' sin of betrayal would only serve the plan of God... which would defeat the power of Satan over humanity.

Next... during the Passover meal celebration... was the breaking of unleavened bread. ... And here...Jesus changed the meaning of the bread.

Luke 22:19

In this setting Jesus ties together what He said earlier to His disciples which John records in John 6:51...

John 6:51 (ESV)

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

During the meal... Jesus brought this new insight to the unleavened bread. He said that the unleavened bread... which originally symbolized the absence of sin... is actually a symbol of His sinless life... that was about to be broken on their behalf.

Next... as they still ate the Passover lamb and unleavened bread... the host would lift the third cup of wine... the Cup of Redemption (*Padah*). A reminder was given for how God had brought them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians... and delivered them from their bondage. ... God had done this by the blood of the Passover lamb... which the believers placed by faith on the door posts of their homes. ...They would sing Psalm 115-118 and eat all the lamb.

With this cup of wine they were supposed to thank God for redeeming them from Egypt... but here... Jesus also brought out a new meaning of the wine:

Luke 22:20

(I hope you caught that!) “**THE** New Covenant” ... not “**A** New Covenant” ! Jesus was **not** developing something and springing it on them “totally out of the blue” ...Jesus was announcing **THE** New Covenant... which every Jew had been told about by Jeremiah, the Prophet... This was a **familiar** promise of God to Israel... as recorded in Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34:

Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34 (ESV)

³¹ *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

“I will put my law within them and will write it on their hearts” ...

The Old Covenant was patently **external**. ... Its laws were written on stone. They provided no internal **power** to live them out. ... To be sure... there was great benefit in knowing them... and even memorizing God's Word. But the writing on the heart... was beyond any human ability... This speaks of something far more radical — a spiritual heart operation.

Dr. Christian Barnard was the first surgeon ever to do a heart transplant. His patient was a fellow doctor. Impulsively one day Dr. Barnard asked his

patient, Dr. Philip Blaiberg, "*Would you like to see your old heart?*" Not long after...the two men stood in a room of the Groote Schuur Hospital, in Johannesburg, South Africa. ... Dr. Barnard went up to a cupboard... took down a glass container and handed it to Dr. Blaiberg. ... Inside that container was Blaiberg's old heart. ... For a moment he stood there stunned into silence — the first man in history ever to hold his own heart in his hands. ... Finally he spoke and for ten minutes asked Dr. Barnard a series of technical questions. ... Then he turned to take a final look at the contents of the glass container... and said... 'So this is my old heart that caused me so much trouble.' He handed it back, turned away and left it forever."

This... in essence... is what Christ does for us. He gives us a new **heart**. Our old heart is desperately wicked and gives us trouble. ... You're more sinful than you ever dared believe; you're more loved than you ever dared hope. ... God has written His laws within us. ... We still battle with our fleshly nature... but through washing and regeneration... He gives a new heart that has power beyond our human ability to obey. ... God's laws are no longer external and foreign but internal.

“For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more”

This is precisely what the Old Covenant could **not** do. ... Under the Old Covenant... sins were never completely forgiven... because they were never truly **forgotten**. ...They were covered... awaiting and pointing to the true forgiveness through Christ's death. ...Some of **us** have phenomenal memories... but God **never** forgets anything. ... In fact... He **cannot** forget unless He actively **wills** to do so. ... He wills to do so for those who are

Christ's followers. ... Our sins are not remembered... and this is because His grace has **determined** to forgive them.

You're more sinful than you ever dared believe; you're more loved than you ever dared hope.

Furthermore...

You don't live in a random world ruled by chance; you live in a world ruled by the God of Exodus and Easter.