Christ Church NYC Lenten Faith Forum 2024

**Entering the Passion of Jesus**—Session 5

**Chapter 5 of “Entering the Passion of Jesus”*—The Last Supper: Risking the Loss of Friends***

*We have five variations for Jesus’ Last Supper…Rather than rush to harmonize the accounts, we should savor each one. In this chapter, we’ll look at several themes that the texts offer: the date of the Last Supper and its connection with the Passover meal called the seder; the betrayal; the bread and the cup; and the concern for service. As always, each text could have a chapter on its own—and so could each verse. We can only give a foretaste, as it were, of the profound stories the Gospels tell. (*Amy-Jill Levine)

**Luke 22:14-27—** *When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I tell you, I will not eat ituntil it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves, for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!” Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this. A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, “The kings of the gentiles lord it over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather, the greatest among you must become like the youngest and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*

* What strikes most you about this story of the Last Supper and its variations?
* What role does Holy Communion play in your personal spirituality?
* Are there some particularly significant moments in your personal history related to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper that you would be willing to share?

Differences in the variations of the story of the Last Supper:

* In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Last Supper takes place on the first night of Passover (making it a seder meal that, for Jews, called to mind the story of the Exodus). In John, the Last Supper takes place 24 hours earlier, so that the meal is not a seder.
* In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus makes reference to desiring to eat the Passover meal (that is, the lamb) with his disciples. In John’s gospel, “Jesus IS the lamb” (AJL).
* In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus emphasizes serving in his teaching. In John’s gospel, he embodies and enacts serving in washing his disciples’ feet.
* Judas’ story is told differently in the gospels, with the common thread of betrayal running through the variations. Matthew adds the motive of greed. In terms of Judas’ death, Luke reports that Judas burst open in a field. In Matthew, Judas hangs himself.

Central themes in the variations:

* Matthew, Mark, and Luke—There is a link between the Last Supper and the Passover, illuminating the gospel-writers’ conviction that Jesus, like the God who delivered in the story of the Exodus, is the deliverer in the new exodus.
* In John’s gospel, Jesus is linked to the lambs that are being slain for the celebration of the next day’s seder. John’s theology of Jesus as “the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” finds expression in the Last Supper.
* Betrayal—Though the stories vary, the theme of betraying Jesus is given narrative weight throughout.
* Serving—Jesus makes a point of linking the remembrance of his broken body and shed blood with a commitment to serving and loving others.

How would you explain the meaning and significance of Holy Communion to someone who has never celebrated it?