

Miss Dani's Maundy Thursday Sermon

Based on the Gospel of John's Passover with the disciples

The opening of Jesus' active time performing miracles, and ministering to the people he encountered starts with the first miracle at the wedding in Cana. Which is a celebration. Prompted by his mother, he has the stewards fill the wine jars with water, and turned that water into wine. And not just 2 buck chuck. He made sure they set the tables with the fancy stuff. That's the first food and beverage related miracle and ministry time.

Jesus fed people, ate meals with unexpected and unpopular people, and spoke in food related analogies throughout the season of actively ministering to the people he encountered. Jesus was a food motivated friend. But now we've come to the end. Jesus has been telling the disciples that his time with them is coming to the end for a while.

He's attempted to provide them with the tools and skills to keep moving forward once his time with them has come to an end He's been providing spoiler alerts. And now he's entered the final days. Instead of retreating by himself to have some peace at the end, he chooses to keep talking about the end. Jesus is telling them the end of the story before the disciples think they've even finished the first act. And he reminds them once again at a dinner celebration.

We as human beings love to talk about the end. The end of the world, the end of a story, what our last meal on earth would be. Entire genres of movies and TV shows focus on the end. Linkin Park has a song about it. And the Bible gives us a look at the end of an era with the disciples. This is the last time they would gather and eat together. And they're doing this as part of the Passover celebration at someone else's home. We call this meal the Last Supper. Because it's the last one. The evening kicks off with Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. The ritual cleansing that would have been historically done by slaves or servants. And Jesus takes on the task himself before the meal begins. He's letting them know in this Last Supper, that he's reached the end of a countdown of sorts. His time clock of being here on earth with them is ticking down in the final moments and hours. And he is celebrating with those who have followed him closest, including the one that will ultimately be the catalyst in his death.

Those final moments in certain cultures are treated differently. Our friends in New Orleans do not sit with death as a somber affair. Jazz funerals and second line parades dot the city as death is not seen as the final act. It is the celebration that you have moved on to join Jesus in heaven. Jazz trumpets parade before the caskets, mourners, and even the priests. One of the best examples that shows these celebrations of death is in the Originals TV.

One doesn't expect a great representation and honoring of these cultural practices from a show that's essentially about the never ending cycle of crisis that a family of 14th century vampires and werewolves encounter in the French Quarter. But they give some great depictions of jazz funerals and second line parades, also in the celebrations taking place the evening before a funeral, where there is food and fellowship aplenty. Much like the food and fellowship of Jesus. Those jazz funerals have inspired the music for tonight. The last celebration until the Resurrection.

Over a decade ago, when I was discussing Holy Week and our morbid fascination with the end of days, and apocalyptic scenarios with a pastor I worked with in Iowa, I offhand mentioned to him a movie I'd seen in passing. In the movie, humanity ceases aging at 25. And a time clock is added to your arm.

Time becomes the currency of the people. Minutes and seconds are how you are paid, how you purchase goods, time is what the Mission hands out to those in deep need. The more time you have accrued, the nicer the areas you can travel, eat, even the home you can live in. The curious part of the movie is that those who have lived and worked full lives, in their 90's, still have the outward appearance of being 25, as the physical body doesn't age. But the moment you run out of that time, you die where you are when that clock ticks down.

We don't get the luxury of being like the characters of that movie, with a time clock showing us when our shot clock at life runs out. Sometimes we do get estimates. We're given a finite amount of time where we're still going to be on this earth. Jesus has spent much of the last year of his ministry trying to equip and help those around him to be prepared to carry on the ministry work without him, as he knows his time on Earth will rapidly come to an end. Would we approach the end differently if we knew exactly when our clock was running out? We can't see into the future.

Apocalypse comes from the Greek word for uncovering. We attribute this word to a variety of things

- a. a prophecy or revelation, especially regarding a final cataclysmic battle between good and evil.
- b. **the apocalypse**, in some belief systems, a final cataclysmic battle of this kind, in which evil is defeated and the present age brought to a close:
 - a. **the apocalypse**, the end of civilization; the complete destruction or collapse of the world as we know it
- c. any universal or widespread destruction or disaster:

Our movies love fixating on this. Asteroids hurtling towards Earth, deep freeze reverse hurricanes taking over the Northern Hemisphere and freezing from the North Pole to south of Monterrey, and across the entire country into Virginia. Scientists provide estimates on when the world is ending. We see the last moments of these people.

In *Don't Look Up*, the final moments of some of the main characters are spent at their own last supper. Instead of sitting in bunkers, or attempting to hop on some doomsday vessel, they are seated at a table. Sharing food, drinks, laughter, and the pleasure of being together at the end of the world as we know it. They aren't preoccupied with watching the clock tick down. 4 years ago, we were also sitting quietly, looking at the countdowns, trying to figure when we'd resume life as normal. We thought that we would eradicate Covid by shutting down for 2 weeks, and then quickly resuming normal once again. 2 weeks turned into a month, months turned into seasons. We turned to Zoom holidays and eating entirely out of doors for safe celebrations.

Jesus has entered that count down with the disciples and with us. We watch these last hours tick down.

But what about the food?

The ritual, that became our sacrament, tells us that there is bread and the cup of wine. But what else would have been at this last supper? This final time that the disciples and those with Jesus gather and are together. What would the meal look like? Would everyone have been seated all on 3 sides of the table, like Da Vinci depicted?

No.

Low tables, cushions.

The women would have prepared the meal. The bread would have been prepared by women. The lamb roasted and basted over the fire. Beans prepped, soaked, boiled, set in coals to keep warm while they stewed. Figs and dates cleaned, checked for bugs. Assorted herbs, vegetables, fruits, nuts prepared for the table. Eggs cooked. The meal would have been kosher, so no mixing meat and dairy, and no unclean foods. We don't keep kosher, so you'll see there's a mix of dairy involved. I grew up in the Midwest. If there wasn't dairy on the table in some capacity, something was probably not right. I like to think though, that Jesus maybe asked his mom to make the beans he liked. Or if she'd make the fish the perfect way. Finding comfort in the food of that last meal in as much as he finds comfort and joy in celebrating with those around him. Tonight, we find the good news in sharing together as Jesus taught.

So tonight, we have celebrated. Tonight's last supper tables featured items from what I'd serve if I knew tonight was my last dinner party. That if the world was ending tomorrow, what I'd want to share with the folks I was gathered around a table. Some of the food has been inspired by what Jesus would have eaten with the disciples. The lamb stew, the roast lamb, the eggs, the olives and pickled fish and vegetables. Other food would be the food that I'd like to eat one last time if it's my last supper on earth. Some parts are nostalgic. The bean and burger concoction my dad would make when my mom went out of town, served with white wonder bread, which we only got to eat when mom was gone.

Tormented eggs, a favorite holiday appetizer of my grandpa, who didn't think the Devil had any business with the best hors d'oeuvre. Midwest salads that aren't really salads. Trout and game hen. Potatoes and stuffing.

For communion, which will serve as the dessert course of the dinner party, we'll be having the gluten free version of my grandpa's favorite cookie recipe, along with my favorite wine and grape juice as the end cap of the evening. Jesus finished the meal with the disciples with this sharing of the bread and cup, and we'll share together at the conclusion of the meal.

There are some table discussion questions on the back side of your menu, to inspire thoughts on what your last supper would be. Finish your celebration for a bit, and Luke will start the piano when it's time for us to gather together again.

What is one favorite dish you'd want to have at a last supper?

Who would you want to be able to eat with during your final meal?

If you were serving communion, what would you want as your bread and drink if you were using your favorite items?

How would you spend your last two days if you knew you had 48 hours left?