

Series: The Cross

March 12, 2017

## **Title: The Upper Room**

**[Slide 1]**

**Text: Mark 14:12-25**

### **The House of God**

**This very old house:**

**[Slide 2]**

You've just bought a house that stands on a hill at the end of a maple lane. Built just after the American Revolution, its inhabitants have lived through the Civil War and two world wars. It has weathered blizzards and heat waves, floods and droughts. A plaque by the front door reads simply: "1829."

It has seen better days. Drop a ball on the floor and it will inevitably roll to the outside wall. Doors no longer stay closed. Windows refuse to open. Cracks have opened up in the plaster.

Wondering what to do, you call a carpenter to assess the problem. He goes down into the basement, takes out his pocket knife, and pokes at the thick sill beam that rests on the stone foundation. The knife disappears right to the hilt. He tries again a little further along the sill. Same result. The sill is rotten, causing the house to settle on the foundation.

### **How bad is bad enough?**

You ask him what he has to do to fix the problem.

"It won't be easy," he replies with a frown. "*First*, we'll have to jack the house up off the foundation and replace the sills. Then we'll have to take off some of the siding to see how far the rot has progressed up the walls. No telling how big a job it will turn out to be."

Now you have a choice to make: Do you turn him loose on the house or do you just try to stop the house from settling anymore? Maybe a few bags of cement and some well-placed cinder blocks will hold it up? And about those doors and windows? Well, you could always shave a little off the sides and

make them work. Patch the cracks in the walls. Hang a picture over the place where the plaster is gone. How bad could it really be, anyway?

The only problem is that half-measures do nothing but ensure that the house continues to fall into the ground. If you want to fix the house, you have to get rid of every bit of rot. You have to restore the sills, replace rotten timbers, get rid of rotted window casings, and level the floors.

If you want the house to go another 100 years, you will have to commit to rebuilding it from the ground up.

### **God's House:**

The Bible tells us the story of a very special house: God's House. It is the story of God choosing a group of people – a family, a community, and eventually a nation – to be His house. He chose the Hebrew people to be his dwelling here on earth. Through them, He purposed to restore His entire world.

But like the old house on the hill, the house that was God's People had fallen into decay. The community of people that was meant to worship and serve the One True God became corrupted with the dry rot of idolatry, worshipping the creation instead of the Creator. The masters of the house again and again abused its inhabitants. Slowly but surely, the sills rotted on the foundations; the house sagged and tore itself apart. Water poured in through the many cracks in the roof and walls.

Over the years the houses' inhabitants tried any number of home improvement measures. But they could never address the deep underlying problem of human idolatry and the sin that comes with it.

God, however, never gave up on building His House. He sent His Son to be the master builder who would finally restore it to its God-given purpose.

### **Jerusalem, April A.D. 33**

By Passover week in April 33 Jesus had poked His knife into the rotten sills of God's House. When He arrived in Jerusalem, His message was simple: it was time to tear out all of the rot and corruption and let God rebuild the House!

For the keepers of the status quo, this was outrageous and unacceptable on any terms. The political and religious leaders – the chief priests and teachers of the law – banded together to kill the Carpenter. They schemed with Judas to arrange for Jesus' capture. There would be no rebuilding of the House as far as they were concerned. The rot and corruption were just part of how the world worked. It would stay; Jesus would die.

But God had another plan, a plan so outrageous that no one would have ever imagined it. God intended that instead of letting evil hide behind a façade of religious piety, it would be completely brought into the light of day. It would be like ripping the siding of an old house to expose every single rotted beam and board.

And when this evil was fully exposed, God intended that all of it – every last sin – be focused on the Carpenter. He would tear out every bit of rot and rebuild the house -- no matter the cost to Himself.

There was no other way.

## **The Upper Room**

### **The hour of evil:**

Mark tells us that on the evening of the Passover meal the last boards were ripped from the old house and the full extent of its corruption were exposed.

Jesus had known that His enemies were out to arrest Him. He knew as well that there was a mole – a traitor within His inner circle. For that reason, He arranged a secret signal for the two trustworthy disciples who went into the city to prepare the Passover meal. They were to look for a man carrying a water jar. Since men never carried water jars, this would be a signal that they had found the right person. They were to follow him and ask the owner of the house he entered a specific question:

### **[Slide 3]**

*Mark 14:14 NIV*

*"Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'"*

Then, once the meal had begun, Jesus ripped away that last board with these words:

**[Slide 4]**

*Mark 14:18 NIV*

*While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me."*

Then, a moment later, in answer to their agonizing question, "Surely you don't mean me?" He said:

*Mark 14:20 NIV*

*"It is one of the Twelve, one who dips bread into the bowl with me."*

The evil and corruption of the House of God, of Israel, had spread from Israel's foundation – its chief priests and teachers of the law – all the way to the innermost room where the Son of God had come to dwell. The enemy was not just a chief priest in Jerusalem; it was one of the Twelve.

God's House was corrupted to the extent that one of Jesus' own most trusted friends had already agreed to hand Him over to death.

The sin and evil that had lurked within God's People, God's House, for almost 2000 years, now focused its full fury on One Man. He would bear the full brunt of its power.

But before that happened, there would be one more Passover meal in the condemned house.

**This is my body:**

The Passover meal was a meal with a story. The meal began at sunset and could last until midnight. During that time a family and closest friends gathered and relived the moment that God set His people free from slavery in Egypt.

Every part of the meal helped tell the story:

- The unleavened bread was called "the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt."
- The dish of bitter herbs recalled the bitterness of slavery.
- The dish of stewed fruit, the color of clay, recalled making bricks for Pharaoh.

- And the main dish, a roasted lamb, recalled the little lamb that each family had killed that night, with its blood smeared on the doorway to their home, as a token of their trust in God's protection when the destroying angel struck Egypt's firstborn.

This night, however, they would not just relive an ancient story. This night it was to happen again. The destroying angel was once again on the loose, prowling the streets of Jerusalem. The evil of the world had come to a head. The firstborn would die. But it would not be the firstborn of an evil king; it would be the Firstborn of all Creation, the Son of the Creator Himself.

And that is why Jesus broke with the Passover script:

**[Slide 5]**

*Mark 14:22 NIV*

*While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."*

The Passover was no longer a story. It was no longer a meal. It was a Person.

**This is my blood:**

When the Passover meal was almost over, Jesus took the third cup of wine and said:

**[Slide 6]**

*"May the All-merciful One make us worthy of the days of the Messiah and of the life of the world to come. He brings salvation to the king. He shows covenant-faithfulness to his Anointed, to David and to his seed forever. He makes peace in his heavenly places. May he secure peace for us and for all Israel. And say you, Amen."*

To which all would respond: "Amen." (N. Glatzer (ed.), *The Passover Haggadah*, as cited in Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 505)

This blessing promised that God would one day restore the decayed house through the coming Messiah King. Then, after the blessing, Jesus passed the cup to His disciples and said:

**[Slide 7]**

*Mark 14:24 NIV*

*"This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many."*

Jesus would be the Passover lamb whose blood would set God's people free. His death would seal forever the renewed covenant between God and human beings made in His image. His death would pay the price for the rebuilding of the House. All of the evil and corruption of the entire world go to the grave with Him when He died.

As Isaiah wrote:

**[Slide 8]**

*Isaiah 53:5 NIV*

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

## **The Fourth Cup**

### **Jesus' vow:**

The Passover meal came to an end with a final, fourth, cup of wine. When it came time to drink this cup, Jesus made a solemn vow:

**[Slide 9]**

*Mark 14:25 NIV*

*"Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."*

He would drink a different cup that night: the bitter cup of judgment brought upon all the sins of the world.

But He promised that the time would come when God's House was fully restored. One day the Father and His family would gather around the dining room table in the restored House of God.

And when they did, Jesus would drink the fourth and final cup of the New Passover.

### **Under construction:**

**[Slide 10]**

You and I together are God's House. It is a house that has been set aright on the one and true foundation: Jesus the Messiah. It is a house that God's Spirit is renewing and restoring, one life, one generation at a time. We're a work in progress.

And that means that we must choose to let the Carpenter do His work in our lives. It means allowing Him to poke His pocket knife into the beams of our relationships, our thoughts and our actions to see if the rot of this world and its false gods has crept in. It means allowing Him to take out the bad and replace it with the eternal building materials of heaven.

It means, more than anything else, deciding to be a place where God will dwell.

## **LIFE Group Lesson for “The Upper Room”**

### **This old house:**

- Have you ever done a remodeling project? What did you have to get rid of? What new things did you incorporate into the project?

### **Concentrating the evil of the world:**

- A remodeling project brings us face to face with what’s wrong in our house:
  - It may be uninsulated walls that let the cold wind blow through the house.
  - It may be a leaky sink or shower stall that causes water and mold to accumulate on the walls and floor.
  - It may just be that we want a new look.
  - Whatever the case, we have to make a list of what has to go before we can make things new.
- God’s decision to restore and remake His Creation required that He do the same thing with all that is broken and corrupt in the world.
  - We live in a world that is a mixture of the good and the bad, so much so that it is virtually impossible for us to disentangle the two.
  - Life becomes filled with compromises, shades of grey, good tainted with evil, and vice versa.
  - In order to remake and restore His world, God had to first of all “gather up” all the evil in the world so that it could be dealt with once and for all.
  - It’s sort of like having that big dumpster out in your driveway when you are doing a major remodeling project: it collects all the old sheetrock, moldy carpet, and everything else you need to get rid of.
- God’s plan was that He would allow all of the world’s corruption and brokenness to be concentrated *on Himself in the person of His Son*.
  - Jesus came as the representative of God’s People.
  - He allowed all that is wrong with the world to be focused on Him and Him alone.



- When He died on the Cross, He did so as an outcast -- a convicted criminal, a heretic and a traitor -- even though He was completely innocent.
- An ancient prophecy foretold that this would happen:
  - *Isaiah 53:3-6 NIV*
  - *He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.*
  - *Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.*
  - *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*
  - *All we like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

### **The great battle:**

- This is what Jesus was saying to His disciples when He modified the Passover celebration by defining the bread and the wine as His body and blood.
  - He would become the Passover lamb whose blood was poured out for the salvation of His people.
  - He would be the firstborn who died on Passover.
  - He would take the battle into Death's own realm and emerge victorious.
  - He would be the Carpenter who rebuilt God's ruined House.

### **Prayer time:**

- What remodeling project is God working on in your life right now?
- In what way can you let the Carpenter come in and do the work that only He can do?
- Pray for each other to have the courage and commitment to allow Jesus do build us up into God's House.