

Stepping Into the River of Grace

Pastor Morgan Murray

West Valley Presbyterian Church

Mark 14:12-25 (NRSV)

12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 13 So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18 And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" 20 He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24 He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (1989). (Mk 14:12–25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Theme: The Lord's Supper, and the Passover Meal from which Jesus based it, are grace-meals. They draw us in without condition and send us out transformed.

The Essential Lord's Supper, according to Mark's gospel:

1. Is a Grace-based meal. Grace is more than unearned favor. It is also power—the power to live the best life possible, to give ourselves away in love for the world as Jesus does.

2. Is an emotionally messy affair. There is a group of people who don't necessarily like each other, much less trust each other. There is a betrayal by a friend. As we look around the room and even think about those who have never shared in this table before, we realize that Jesus is opening this table up to absolutely everyone.

3. Centers around Jesus as the host, in more ways than one. Jesus himself is the host of the table, even this morning. He presides over it, orchestrates it, and even places himself

in the midst of it.

Last week I offered you the image of the 12 inch journey in which the head knowledge about God moves into our hearts. Having made that journey, we can walk with others who have yet to take the 12 inch journey from the heart to head; that is, to take the “sense of the divine” they have naturally and connect it the person of Jesus Christ and the transformative power of the gospel.

This week I am offering you a different image—the image of Grace like a river. God’s grace is available to all of us, and we flow within that river whether we realize it or not. Often we don’t. Instead we swim against its current and try to live life on our own terms, in our own strength. As a result, we get exhausted. But if we will surrender to it, and engage the rhythms of grace, then we find that God’s provision flows toward us. The Lord’s Supper is one of those forms of grace.

Through the Eucharist, we:

- Return to Christ over and over
- Remember that practice-based faith is not about the practice, but about Christ. In, through, because of Christ we risk getting into the river at all
- Are transformed into people who can humbly receive from God. As Ian Morgan Cron points out: Communion can’t be taken. It can only be received. Taking is what happened in the Garden of Eden. But opening our hands to receive will put the world back together.

So come to the table...

... Even though you don’t fully understand it;

... Because you know within yourself that you are exhausted from your own efforts, and that you need it;

.... In order to cultivate a longing to see others share it with us.

Morgan Murray

Transitional Pastor

West Valley Presbyterian Church

6191 Bollinger Road

Cupertino, CA 95014

408/252.1365 x111

wvpc.org

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