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First Christian Church  
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**“For the Lord Has Freed Me...”**  
**Communion Meditation for Maundy Thursday**

When we are asked to tell about a special meal we had, usually our answer is couched in terms of what we ate. Facebook, for example, is replete with pictures – some of which I’ve posted myself – of various kinds of food that people have enjoyed at a meal. People debate the merits or lack thereof of different styles of barbecue, or recipes for the perfect yeast rolls for Thanksgiving dinner, or show off pictures of the most intricate and complex birthday cakes. We like our food and we like to talk about our food. It’s intriguing, then, that none of the gospel descriptions of the last supper include the menu for the meal – except, of course, for the bread and wine. But surely they ate more than just that. Where are the pictures, the Pinterest and Instagram posts, the selfie-shots in front of what they were about to eat? Why the silence in the gospels about what’s for dinner?

Well, what we too often forget is that this wasn’t just any meal, like the hundreds of other meals Jesus had shared with his disciples. No, this was the **Passover** meal. Jesus and his companions were devout Jews and so had gathered, as had their forebears for millennia, to eat this meal together that recalled how God had freed the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt so long ago. And so any of the Jewish hearers or readers of this story would have **known** what was on the menu that night; they wouldn’t have needed a recounting of what was served. The **knew** the menu: the herbs, the vegetables, the fruit-and-nut paste, the lamb or goat, the hard boiled egg, the bread and the wine. And what we have too often forgotten is that all of those foods are symbols of various parts of the story of God’s freeing God’s people so long ago, and of how God continues to free people from whatever seeks to

imprison them.

So when Jesus says the wine is the new covenant in his blood, he is not doing an utterly new thing, he is not repudiating what God has always done, but now extends it and makes it even more explicit. For you see, the Passover is about God's desire that we be free from what imprisons us, particularly when those prison bars are of our own making – the bigotries we take secret pride in, the resentments we nurse like a badge of honor, the justified angers that we refuse to find a way forward from, the fear of “the other” and those who are “different” that we too often hold dear. And Jesus' promise through that cup is that God will continue to seek to free the Jewish people and indeed all people, and that not even death will defeat, deter, or demoralize God.

But this also means that as we leave this service, the taste of bread on our lips and the tang of juice on our tongues, we are called by that Passover, that Last Supper to also be ones who would seek to free both ourselves and our fellow human beings from what is trapping them and hurting them. It means that we ought never, ever, ever repeat the lies about “the Jews” being responsible for Jesus' death for it was Roman Imperial power that killed him and this lie that too many Christians have told has caused incalculable pain. But it also means that we are called not to lie about **anyone** whom God loves. We are called to know that God loves and wants the best possible and freest lives for gay and straight, young and old, liberal and conservative, Jew or Greek, male or female. We are called, therefore, to never ever put up fences around anyone's freedom or to ally ourselves with bigotry in any way.

Because this meal we take tonight and that meal so long ago are both about God's continuing and un-defeatable effort to free folks from bondage, to free us from what traps us and keeps us from being the best followers of Christ that we can be, to free this world from

the hatreds and xenophobias that seek to consume it. Psalm 34 says it this way: "Taste and see that the Lord is good.... [for the Lord has] has freed me from all my fears." May we know it to be so on this night and every day of our lives.