

(Mark 14:12-16, NIV84)

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 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?' He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

It was in Egypt that the tradition began. It started on the day God's people were commanded to take a spotless year-old male sheep or goat, approximately one for each family, and at twilight they were to kill it.

They were to roast it so that it might be eaten with bitter herbs and they were to eat it that very night. Whatever leftovers remained, they were to burn. But most importantly, each household was to take the blood of the animal and paint it on the doorframe of their house. This would serve as a sign to the Angel of Death that he should pass over that house and not enter it to take the life of every firstborn.

This solemn tradition was celebrated by Jesus every year of His earthly life, but the last time He would celebrate it would be the most significant.

That tradition was meant to foreshadow what Jesus would do for us. Christ -- the Lamb of sacrifice -- would be offered up to God, and His blood would shield us from God's wrath.

Albeit modified from our traditional way of celebrating, may this Holy Week be for us a solemn celebration of a series of meaningful traditions -- all good -- because in them we remember what Jesus has given us (His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins), what He has done for us (His sacrificial death on the cross as a full payment to God on our behalf), and who He has made us to be (God's very own children and heirs of heaven).

In Holy Week reflection with you in Christ, Pastor Golm  
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April 6

"I Go To Prepare a Place for You"

I am going there on purpose to prepare a place for you. John 14:2 NEB

It was early that same day that Peter and John had gone ahead to Jerusalem to "prepare a place" for Jesus. In those days it was customary for travelers to send one or two of their

company ahead to make the necessary provisions for food and shelter and to "prepare a place" for those who were soon to follow.

How beautifully the words of the Savior spoken that night in the Upper Room fit into the framework of this ancient custom. "I go to prepare a place for you", he says. "And if I go to prepare a place for you [notice the repetition of affection! I will come again and receive you unto myself."

Christ, our fellow-traveler on the highway of life who has tasted the hardships of our journey, has gone ahead to prepare a place for us.

We may not be able to picture all that is meant by these simple words of our Lord, but this we do know: His going ahead to the Father's house above was definitely for our benefit-"a place for you"-and his present activity in the heavenly mansions, his intercession before the Father's throne, his sovereign rule over heaven and earth, and his tender care for those who have come to God by him are all a preparation for our eternal joy and glory. Our final, safe arrival in his Father's house is the purpose of his activity in heaven.

What a comfort when the journey becomes hard or the way dark to know that our Brother Christ, who has gone on ahead, is preparing a place for us in the celestial mansions! Through faith in him, we shall someday occupy our prepared place in the Father's house above.

But our Savior Christ is by no means to be seen as an "absent landlord" constructing heavenly mansions for his loved ones. The same Poet who wrote: "He lives my mansions to prepare, He lives to bring me safely there", also wrote:

He lives to silence all my fears, He lives to wipe away my tears, He lives to calm my troubled heart, He lives all blessings to impart.

He who someday will receive us into eternal glory is the same Lord who is with us now in all his grace and mercy.