

Text: Mk 14.22-31

For our communion service today, I want to turn to one of the accounts of its institution, in the Gospel of Mark.

I do not intend on a long message this afternoon, but I do want to capture a particular sentiment from the passage for our meditation.

A few words before we read the passage to set the scene.

The meal the Lord and the disciples are enjoying is the Passover Meal. There is a set ritual in the Jewish tradition of four separate cups being passed during the meal. Alfred Edersheim suggests that this cup is the third of the four, the Cup of Blessing.

Judas has already departed the room on his hasty errand. His absence is significant at this point, I believe.

The Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke, but not John) and Paul do not dwell on the Jewish ritual. This suggests that all that is done away, and something new is in its place. It is founded on the old, but it is not the old, it is something new.

This is in keeping with our understanding of the New Testament.

Now, let's read our passage: Mk 14.22-31

I. The Covenanting Service itself (22-26)**A. The communion of the bread (22)**

1. The statement: 'This is my body' identifies the bread as representative of himself
2. The distribution symbolizes a common sharing (a communion) in him by the disciples

B. The covenanting cup (23-24)

1. The common cup is passed around the table, the element of communion is likewise present (23)
2. The announcement of covenant: (24)
 - a. The cup represents the blood of the covenant
 - 1) Blood is symbolic of ratification in ancient covenants

2) Moses ratified the Mosaic covenant with blood

^{NAU} **Exodus 24.8** So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

3) The word for covenant here is one which involves only one testator: it is not a treaty, it is a testament, dependent on only one party to ratify

διαθηκη vs. συθηκη

b. The blood poured out is ‘instead of’ many (υπερ)

In this case, many means all, but the covenant is ratified only with the few.

C. The promise of the new cup (25)

1. The statement anticipates the covenant memorialized in the eschatological age: the memorial in this age becomes *anticipation* as well as *commemoration*.
2. The new cup means that everything about it is new; the meaning of this is not clear to us now

D. The closing hymn (26)

Probably the second part of the Hallel (Ps 115-118)

II. The abandonment prophesied (27-31)

A. The Lord prophesies scattering (27-28)

1. The prophecy is a quotation of Zech 13.7

^{NAU} **Zechariah 13.7** “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate,” Declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

2. The prophecy is not of permanent abandonment, but of flight at attack

B. Peter (and all) protest (29-31)

1. Peter vehemently denies he will abandon the Lord
2. The Lord prophesies Peter's denial
3. The rest chime in, joining in the chorus of rash promises

The first thing we should say about this is that these men stand for all of us: We may be bold to say we would stand under persecution, but would we?

We need to pursue a close relationship with God, depending on him for daily strength and be much in prayer that we not faint in the evil day.

III. The meaning plumbed

A. The covenant depends on Him, not us: διαθηκη not συθηκη

B. The covenant was made by Him, *knowing* us: the Lord was not surprised at any of this

1. He was not surprised at their protests
2. He was not surprised by their later fear and flight
3. He was not surprised by Peter's denial

He made the covenant anyway.

You ought not be fearful and doubtful if you find yourself slipping and failing the Lord (don't plan to fail!) — He is faithful, and has already made the way of escape.

C. The covenant means that you are part of his body

1. He cares more for you than you do
2. He will 'nourish and cherish' you

Walk in faith!

Conclusion:

The scene would soon shift to the marching mob, the flaming torches, the swords, the fear, the flight and Peter's weeping.

Be assured that if you are in Christ you are a new creation!