

Let's Have a Feast and Celebrate

✠ Trust God's Word (vv.7-13)

✠ Not afraid of Jesus' suffering (vv.14-20)

In the name of Jesus, our Brother and Savior, dear heirs of God's eternal grace:

Have you ever wanted something so bad it hurts? All the other kids have shiny new bikes, why can't you? Then your Mom tells you, "It's okay to want something as long as you remember God says, 'You shall not covet.'" Sleepless in your middle years, God reminds you, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house...or land...or wife." So many desires knee deep in "I want..." until we just wish we could get up from a bed of suffering, or walk, or chew a juicy steak. All my desires – mostly for me.

So different, Jesus is so different from all of us. No baby ever says, "Go ahead, family, sleep! I'll just lie here quietly." "Civil servants"? Where's the heart of a servant? Who is civil? Ever hear a pastor called "a man of the cloth"? How many are men these days? How many a "cloth" hides unholy desires that would get us pelted with rocks if parishioners knew our thoughts? We prove God right when He says, "**All men are liars.**" (Psalm 116:11) Or Paul quoting the Old Testament: "**There is no one righteous, not even one... their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips.**" (Romans 3:10,13 NIV) Selfish hypocrisy, unholy desires – why would God desire anything good for us?

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And yet, for many chapters now, Jesus has been longing for us. Back in Luke 9:51, the Holy Spirit says, "**As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.**" Not some sixth sense draws Him or a religious leader's hope of a following. Jesus tells His disciples of cruel death and total rejection by their church. Yet Jesus presses on. Things looked good a few days ago with palm branches waving and children singing, "Hosanna!" But Tuesday saw some of the worst snakes in the temple spitting venom at Jesus. They want Him dead, but He won't hide. And here He's saying, "**As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.**" Are you hoping like Peter and John that the worst has passed?

*Be still, my soul; the Lord is on your side; Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to your God to order and provide; In ev'ry change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; your best, your heav'nly friend Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end. **

How thorny your ways can feel when friends turn their back on you. The boss who sounded so positive last week let's you go on a day when you worked a major breakthrough. You wonder where the mortgage will come from; unemployment benefits can't go on forever. Your surgery won't heal. Your heart is failing in grief and pain. So much of what you wanted is lost. You feel so very alone.

*Be still, my soul; your God will undertake To guide the future as he has the past.
Your hope, your confidence, let nothing shake; All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know His voice who ruled them while he lived below.*

That's the wonder of God's gift of faith, enabling us to **Trust God's Word**. Peter and John "**left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.**" Jesus not only foretold what to expect, He proved again His ability to "guide the future as he has the past." We need only be still and calm our troubled hearts on God's gracious promises, His power over wind and wave.

The Passover gives us good reason to **Trust God's Word**. Centuries enslaved the Israelites in Egypt. Pharaoh's paranoia murdered Jewish baby boys. Nine plagues devastated the land, and still Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let God's people go. One plague remained, one night of death throughout the land, one meal before the Exodus, and God says make it lamb. Not just any lamb, but a year old male without defect, no broken bones, roasted whole. Stranger still, "Moses, have the people paint the lamb's blood on the doorposts." 1500 years since the first **Passover**, and here Jesus celebrates with His disciples. "**The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**" (John 1:29) gives Himself to make us...

✠ **Not afraid of Jesus' suffering (vv.14-20)**

What's the longest you've ever wanted something? Jesus told His disciples, "**I have longed very much to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.**" (NETNT) How long was Jesus longing? Months? A lifetime? No, Jesus' was longing over 1500 years, long before the first **Passover**. In eternity "**the LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.**" (Isaiah 59:15-17 NIV)

We would have been shaking like a leaf seeing so little. But Jesus felt the horror of the cross. He warned of Peter's cowardly denial, Judas' dastardly betrayal, their flight on feet that could not stand still and support their Savior in His time of need or even kneel in prayer. All would run away, and Jesus would suffer alone. Yet He was not afraid. He came, He stayed, He pressed on to suffer for you.

*Be still, my soul, though dearest friends depart
And all is darkened in the vale of tears;
Then you will better know his love, his heart,
Who comes to soothe your sorrows and your fears.
Be still, my soul; your Jesus can repay
From his own fullness all he takes away.*

Is your inheritance gone? Did you waste it on a sinful life? Did you wake up with the pigs, tired, dirty, hungry, ashamed of your miserable life? Job did not know why such sorrow came on him, but did you bring this on yourself? More importantly, is it Judas' time to despair? Or the prodigal son's time to come home? Think about your father, your real Father in heaven, His kindness even for His servants.

Look at Jesus' hands in His Holy Supper. They're different now. He takes the bread with His left hand; you see the scar from the nail. He hands you the bread, then the cup with His right – nail prints in both. His great longing is fulfilled: "**This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.... This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you.**" Look into Jesus' eyes. See those deep pools of love? They're really the eyes of that lonely father watching the road where his son would finally come home. At last you're there with a speech prepared. You want to say, "**Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you....Make me like one of your servants,**" but He won't let you finish. To His servants He cries, "**Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**" (Luke 15:22-24 NIV)

*Be still, my soul; the hour is hast'ning on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.*

You know that brother is right. You really don't deserve this. This is "grace"! The Father's open arms. The Savior's body and blood. The Spirit's fresh new clothes. "**Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.**" (Psalm 37:4-6 NIV) **Let's Have a Feast and Celebrate** – the grace and mercy of our God. Amen.