

Virtual Lenten Study 2026
THE LAST SUPPER
Conversations That Led To The Cross by Will Willimon
February 11- March 18, 2026, Wednesdays, 6 pm – 7 pm
New Awakening UMC

Chapter 6 THE HOST BECOMES THE MEAL
SECTION 1: The Festival of Unleavened Bread – Luke 22:1-7
Summary

As the Passover festival approaches, the tension surrounding Jesus intensifies. The religious leaders secretly look for a way to arrest and kill Jesus, but they fear the reaction of the people. In this moment of darkness, Judas Iscariot becomes the instrument of betrayal, allowing Satan to influence his decision to hand Jesus over to the authorities for money. Even as this conspiracy unfolds, the sacred season of Passover is beginning, the same celebration that commemorates God's deliverance of Israel from bondage. The irony is striking: while Israel prepares to remember God's saving act through the Passover lamb, Jesus himself is about to become the true sacrificial Lamb who will bring ultimate redemption.

Scripture: Luke 22:1-7

- 1 Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near.
- 2 The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they were afraid of the people.
- 3 Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve;
- 4 he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them.
- 5 They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money.
- 6 So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.
- 7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

Discussion Questions

What does Judas's betrayal reveal about the danger of spiritual compromise or temptation?

How does the connection between Passover and Jesus' coming sacrifice deepen our understanding of the cross?

SECTION 2: The Passover Meal – Luke 22:8-13

Summary

Jesus sends Peter and John ahead to prepare the Passover meal, demonstrating both careful planning and divine authority. He gives them very specific instructions, including the unusual sign of a man carrying a water jar who will lead them to the correct house. When they follow Jesus' directions, everything unfolds exactly as he said. This moment shows that even though events seem chaotic and dangerous, Jesus remains fully aware and in control of what is about to happen. The preparation of the Passover meal sets the stage for the Last Supper, where Jesus will transform a traditional Jewish celebration into a new covenant meal that points to his sacrificial death.

Scripture – Luke 22:8-13

8 So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it."

9 They asked him, "Where do you want us to make preparations for it?"¹⁰ "Listen," he said to them, "when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters¹¹ and say to the owner of the house, "The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"¹² He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there."

¹³ So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

Discussion Questions

Why is it significant that the disciples found everything exactly as Jesus had told them?

How does this moment prepare us for the deeper meaning of the Last Supper?

SECTION 3: Betrayal and Disagreement at The Table – Luke 22:21-29 **Summary**

Even in the sacred moment of the Passover meal, tension and misunderstanding emerge among the disciples. Jesus announces that one of them will betray him, shocking the group and causing them to question one another. Yet almost immediately, their focus shifts to a dispute about which of them is the greatest. Jesus responds by redefining greatness, explaining that leadership in God's kingdom is not about power or status but about service. In a striking example, Jesus describes himself as the one who serves rather than the one who demands honor. This teaching highlights a central theme of the gospel: true leadership in the kingdom of God is expressed through humility, sacrifice, and servant-hearted love.

Scripture – 22:21-29

21 But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table.

22 For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!"

23 Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this.

24 A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

25 But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors.

26 But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves.

27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Discussion Questions

Why do you think the disciples shifted so quickly from concern about betrayal to arguing about greatness?

How does Jesus redefine leadership and greatness in this passage?

SECTION 4: Jesus Confers Royal Power – Luke 22:28-37

Summary

Despite the disciples' misunderstandings, Jesus affirms their faithfulness in remaining with him through difficult times. He promises that they will share in his kingdom and sit at his table, a powerful image of belonging and honor in God's future reign. However, Jesus also warns them about coming spiritual trials. Satan desires to "sift" them like wheat, testing their faith. Jesus specifically tells Peter that he has prayed for him, knowing that Peter will fail but will later return and strengthen others. This moment reveals both human weakness and divine grace, Jesus prepares his followers for hardship while assuring them that their future ministry will still play a crucial role in God's kingdom.

Scripture – Luke 22:28-37

29 and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom,
30 so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

31 "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat,
32 but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

33 And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!"

34 Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me."

35 He said to them, "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a thing."

36 He said to them, "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one.

37 For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, "And he was counted among the lawless"; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled."

Discussion Questions

Why do you think Jesus warns Peter about his coming denial rather than preventing it?

How can failure sometimes prepare believers to strengthen others in faith?

SECTION 5: Jesus Crucifixion and Forgiveness – Luke 23:33-34

Summary

Jesus is crucified at a place called The Skull, placed between two criminals and treated as a condemned man. During intense suffering and humiliation, Jesus responds not with anger but with extraordinary mercy. He prays, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." This statement reveals the heart of Jesus' mission: even as he is being executed, he intercedes for those responsible. The crucifixion becomes the ultimate expression of divine love and forgiveness. The one who served others throughout his ministry now becomes the sacrificial offering for humanity's redemption.

Scripture – Luke 23:33-34

33 When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

34 [Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."] And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

Discussion Questions

What does Jesus' prayer of forgiveness reveal about the character of God?

How might Jesus' example challenge us in situations where forgiveness feels difficult?

SECTION 6: Luke's Resurrection Story - Luke 24:22-26

Summary

After Jesus' death, confusion and uncertainty fill the hearts of his followers. Reports from the women who visited the tomb bring astonishing news that Jesus is alive, yet many struggle to believe it. Jesus responds by reminding them that the prophets had foretold that the Messiah must suffer before entering glory. The resurrection is not a surprising interruption of the story but the fulfillment of God's long-promised plan. Through this moment, Jesus helps his followers understand that suffering, death, and resurrection are all part of the divine purpose of redemption.

Scripture – Luke 24:22-26

22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,

23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.

24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!

26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

Discussion Questions

Why do you think the disciples struggled to believe the news of the resurrection?

What does this passage teach us about trusting God even when events seem confusing or unexpected?

SECTION 7: The Walk to Emaus Meal – Luke 24:36-43

Summary

When the risen Jesus appears to his disciples, they are initially frightened and unsure of what they are seeing. Jesus reassures them by showing his hands and feet and even eating food in their presence, proving that he is truly alive. This moment continues the gospel theme of meals as places of revelation and fellowship. The resurrected Christ then opens their minds to understand the Scriptures and explains that his suffering, death, and resurrection were necessary for God's plan of salvation. He commissions them to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations. The meal becomes a moment of transformation, turning confused followers into witnesses of the risen Lord.

Scripture - Luke 24:36-43

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

37 They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

38 He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

41 While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

43 and he took it and ate in their presence.

Discussion Questions

Why do you think Jesus chose to reveal himself through ordinary acts like eating with the disciples?

How does understanding Scripture help the disciples grasp the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection?

SECTION 8 : The Ongoing Teaching and Meal – Luke 24:44-47

Summary

After revealing himself to the disciples following the resurrection, Jesus continues teaching them and helping them understand the deeper meaning of everything that has happened. He explains that his life, suffering, death, and resurrection were not random events but the fulfillment of what had long been written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. In this moment, Jesus “opens their minds” so they can finally grasp the truth of Scripture and see how God’s redemptive plan has unfolded through him. The resurrection is not only proof that Jesus is alive; it becomes the foundation for the church’s mission. Jesus commissions the disciples to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations. What began at the table in the Last Supper now continues through the ministry of the disciples, who are sent into the world to share the message of salvation and new life.

Scripture – Luke 24:44-47

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled."

45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,

46 and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,

47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Discussion Questions

What does it mean that Jesus “opened their minds” to understand God’s Word?

How does Jesus’ commission to proclaim repentance and forgiveness shape the mission of the church today?

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, We thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ, who welcomed sinners, served others, and ultimately gave his life for the redemption of the world. As we reflect on the table where Jesus gathered with his disciples, remind us that we too are invited into this sacred story of grace. Help us to follow Christ’s example of humility, service, forgiveness, and faithfulness. When we face trials, strengthen our faith just as you strengthened Peter. When we struggle to understand your plans, open our minds to the truth of your Word. And when we gather at the table of Christ, remind us that we are nourished not only to receive grace but also to share it with others. Send us from this Lenten study renewed in faith and committed to proclaiming repentance, forgiveness, and the hope of new life through Jesus Christ. In Jesus holy and precious name, we pray. Amen.

NOTES

Topic: The Last Supper - Lenten Study 2026 - New Awakening UMC
Pastor Monica Jefferson - Facilitator
Time: Feb 11 – March 18, 2026, 6:00 PM Central Time
Every week on Wed, until Mar 18, 2026, 6 occurrence(s)

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