Series: Four Cups

 Based on the book by Chris Hodges.

February 4, 2018

Message One:

**Set Apart**

Exodus 6:6-7

***Table of four goblets with juice …***

**Intro:** We talk about covenants - describe Old Testament covenant practice…

Meals are often a part of the sealing of a covenant.

Passover meal symbolized and memorialized when the Israelites were set free from slavery in Egypt. They went to Sinai where God made His covenant with them. That’s what we refer to as the Old Covenant -

The New Covenant was cut by the blood of Jesus Christ - and just before He sealed that covenant He had a meal with His followers -

Luke 22:20 - After supper he took another cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.”

Covenants are more than promises - they are commitments of life.

* God has committed to helping you to know Him.
* God has committed to set you free from whatever holds you back.
* God has committed to help you discover His purpose for your life.
* God has committed to empowering you to make a difference in the world.

Commitments don’t always mean a whole lot in our culture today - but God keeps His commitments!

Numbers 23:19 - God is not a man, so he does not lie.

He is not human, so he does not change his mind.

Has he ever spoken and failed to act?

Has he ever promised and not carried it through?

When we read the Old Testament history of the nation of Israel, we see that God made four significant promises.

God called a man by the name of Abraham and told him that his descendants would become a great nation. Abraham’s son was Isaac, Isaac’s son was Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. The descendants of Israel became that nation God promised. In the generations after Israel, the nation became slaves in Egypt, and God made these four commitments to them:

Exodus 6:6-7 - Therefore, say to the people of Israel: ‘I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment. I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt.

* I will free you from your oppression.
* I will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt.
* I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment.
* I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God.

When God started to set them free, He sent Moses. Moses survived an attempt at genocide when Egypt’s leader tried to kill every Israelite baby boy. He was actually rescued by the king’s daughter and raised in the king’s house. But ultimately realized he was an Israelite and fled the land - lived in a desert herding sheep for 40 years. Then God sent him back to set the people free. The leader of Egypt refused to let the people go, so God started showing His power. He released harsh plagues upon Egypt, and when the king still wouldn’t let the people go, every firstborn child in the land was killed as a death angel passed through the land. The Israelite families escaped that plague by following God's instructions to kill a lamb, eat a special meal, put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their homes - the death angel would see the blood and pass over those homes - thus, the name of the annual celebration meal became the Passover. Still celebrated today as one of the most significant remembrances for Jewish people.

These four statements are memorialized by four cups of wine that are part of the Passover celebration. For Jewish families, it is like an Independence Day celebration.

The four cups relate to us as well. When we have surrendered our lives to Jesus, we have been brought into the family of God and these commitments become ours in a special way that we are going to teach about in this series.

God wants more for you than you realize. We often get hung up on daily circumstances and difficulties that blind us to the big picture God has for us. Don’t resist the feeling you have that there must be more - God has more for you!

Slavery is an awful thing … we know of our American history … it is the history of the world …

When the Israelites became a part nation in Egypt, the king became afraid of the growth and strength of the people, so he enslaved them. The Israelites were the laborers for some of the great Egyptians cities that were built - but they were built with slave labor - having made bricks of mud and straw.

400 years passed - many generations lived and died knowing nothing but the harsh conditions of slavery.

When Moses came on the scene many didn’t believe him. They never thought they could ever be free. Yet God made these promises.

How does this relate to us? We are born into a kind of slavery. We are born in slavery to sin. Every human being has a nature that is prone to go against God’s good plan for our lives. We have to be set free.

Often, we don’t believe freedom is possible. For some, we have lived a life in the opposite direction of God’s plan for our lives for so long, we don’t believe He cares … He loves … He will set us free from this slavery.

But in a New Covenant, He makes these promises to us as well!

2nd Corinthians 1:20 - For all of God’s promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding “Yes!” And through Christ, our “Amen” (which means “Yes”) ascends to God for his glory.

Fifteen centuries after the first Passover celebration and the deliverance from Egyptian slavery, the Israelites again were in a form of slavery. The Roman Empire had taken over most of the world, their military occupied the land of Israel, and the people were not free. For some, the Passover was just an old worn-out story from history.

The people needed hope. They were hoping and praying that God’s promise of another Deliverer would come in their lifetime.

Someone came along, from a dusty small town named Nazareth. He began to travel and teach - He spoke like no one they had ever heard - miracles started occurring - and everywhere He went there was a huge buzz. People began to wonder - could this be the Messiah - the Promised One - the One chosen and anointed by God to set us free?

Through all of those centuries the Israelites wavered between generations of serving God and generations of rebelling against God.

Part of the problem was that they were living by a set of teachings, but God the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to every person in the covenant.

Jesus was born during this time when the Romans occupied Israel. The people were looking for someone to rise up as a military leader to throw the Romans off their backs. This was their vision of freedom.

That was a false hope - it still is.

Jesus was the One sent by God, but the freedom He would bring would be much greater that a simple national freedom from the Romans. Jesus came to bring the ultimate fulfillment of these promises from Exodus chapter 6. Jesus came to fulfill the promises symbolized by the four cups of the Passover remembrance.

He came to extend the promises of these four cups to all future generations of all people - not just Israelites - these four cups of promise come to us!

When God called Abraham He said that He would make Abraham a blessing to all nations. So we are included in these promises from God!

**The first cup** of the Passover celebration, marking these four promises, is called **the Cup of Sanctification**. It is a Cup of Freedom.

Exodus 6:6 - …I will free you from your oppression…

We are oppressed today by what the Bible calls sin. Sin is not sin because God wants to keep things from us. Sin is sin because sin brings slavery. Sin brings destruction.

Jesus Christ came to fulfill God’s promise to set us free from sin - to set us free from slavery to living a destructive life - and once we have been set free, we are called to take this message of freedom to others.

This is the first purpose of this church. We want people to Know God and be set free from lifestyles that destroy. Just like the Israelites needed to be set free from their slavery - we need to be set free from a life that can only ultimately result in eternal death.

Sanctification means to be set apart as special and holy to God. This is what happens when we confess our sinful lifestyle and surrender our lives to Jesus. He accepts us, sets us free from our sins, and sets us apart as God has a holy purpose for our lives!

**The second cup** is called **the Cup of Deliverance.**

Exodus 6:6- I will … rescue you from your slavery.

God promised not only to bring them out of Egypt, but to set them free from a slavery mindset.

His promise to us is that we are set free when we receive the truth. And once we receive that freedom, we share the truth with others.

John 8:32 - And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

**The third cup** of the Passover remembrance is **the Cup of Redemption.**

Exodus 6:6 - … I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment.

For us this happens when we become disciples, learners, of the way of Jesus Christ. As learners and followers of Jesus ourselves, we are called to tell others about Jesus plan for their lives - and help prepare people to live the life God planned for them and find the purpose He has for their lives. This is the third purpose of our church.

**The fourth cup, the Cup of Praise** -

Exodus 6:7 - I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God.

As we follow Christ, we live a life of praise to Him. Praise is not a Sunday morning activity - praise is a lifestyle of surrender where everything we do we do to honor God.

We will focus on these four cups over the next four weeks - let me just talk a little bit this morning about **the first cup - the Cup of Sanctification** -

Exodus 6:6 - …I will free you from your oppression…

Aunt Jackie praying for food to be sanctified … never understood until I went to the Philippines …

We need to be cleansed. God wants to set us apart for His purpose - and in order for that to happen, we have to let Him clean us up!

At some point we’ve all found ourselves in bondage to something - living our lives with no purpose. We end up settling for less than what God has for us. If we continue on that path, it puts us back into slavery again -

Titus 3:3-5 - Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. But—

 When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

To this day, when the Jewish people celebrate the Passover, they remember that God had a plan to get them out of slavery.

God still wants to get people out of slavery. He wants to get us out of our slavery to sin - a lifestyle that will ultimately destroy us.

Luke 19:10 - For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.

Before we come to know Him, while we are still living the destructive sinful lifestyle, He sees us as lost - He comes to find us.

Luke 15 - Lost sheep - lost coin - lost son …

Great-grandfather TJ Crank testimony … baptisms without change …

God has a purpose for your life - there is a spiritual enemy that wants to keep you from that purpose -

Satan was an angel that rebelled against God - other angels rebelled with him - their destiny is ultimate defeat - but they are still fighting against God’s purposes for your life.

These spiritual enemies want to keep you from God’s purpose for your life. They want to keep you in some kind of bondage.

Are you in bondage now, or are you free? Is there an addiction - a secret habit - a destructive relationship - some obsession that is keeping you from really living free.

This cup of promise is for you! God wants to take you out of that and set you apart for His purpose! He loves you! You are on this planet in the plan of God.

To find and know His purpose for your life, you have to come to Him. You have to accept His offer to have a relationship with HIm. He knows you - He wants you to know Him! He wants to have an intimate, personal relationship with you!

Psalm 139:6 - You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

This is how God sees you!

One form of bondage is religion - Christianity is not a religion - it is a relationship. Religions says you have to do stuff and get your life cleaned up in order to come to God.

Christianity says come to God as you are - with all of your mess - and He will clean you up. He will set you apart for His service. He will sanctify you.

You can’t earn your way into heaven no matter how hard you try.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

God loves you. Jesus loves you. He offers you this free gift.

I want you to realize today that God is pursuing you. He loves you! He has been looking for you!

Just like He saw the oppression of His people in Egypt, He has seen how sin has oppressed your life.

When Jesus walked this earth, He said, “Follow me.”

He is saying that to you today …

Will you accept this cup?

Salvation plan and prayer …

New Life family - will you accept that this is the first purpose of our church family? This is the primary reason we exist in this community? This is our highest goal … to bring people to Know God.