

## Preparation for the Lord's Supper

Dear San Jose Church Family,

This Sunday starts a most significant week on the Christian calendar. This week not only gives the church the opportunity to express gratitude to God but it helps us see how much God loves the whole world. The world needs to know the great price God paid to save us. He gave his only Son therefore we must have great value. Too many people think they are worthless and unlovable. How can we share the truth of John 3:16 with them?

Hours before Jesus suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried he prayed, "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one [in us]. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be [one] in us, *so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*"

We know that we are included in this prayer. What will convince people today that God sent his Son to save humanity? Jesus prayed that we would be in God in the same way he and the Father are in one another. How does God in us prove that the Father sent the Son to the world to save humanity? One of the greatest proofs that God is in a person is witnessed when a formerly selfish, self-centered person loves unlovable, worldly people with unconditional love.

Time and again Jesus proved to be more than a man when he continued loving the unlovable. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as the crowd cheered for him. Jesus' love for the people didn't increase when they cried out "Hosanna" on his way into Jerusalem nor did it diminish when the same people cried out "crucify him!" a few days later. The crowd's love changed but God doesn't. Jesus was more than a man or he couldn't have loved as he did.

The twelve expressed love for Jesus on Thursday night as he shared bread and wine with them. Later they argued over who was the greatest when he needed their encouragement. Then they were unable to stay awake with him as he prayed. They couldn't stand with him when he was arrested. Jesus' love for the disciples remained constant whether they loved him or denied him.

A Roman soldier who witnessed Jesus' brutal beating and crucifixion declared Jesus to be God's Son because Jesus continued loving his tormentors and forgave them. God's love is scandalous. Those who tormented, spat on, beat, betrayed, defamed, denied, and abandoned Jesus deserved to be damned. In the world a father seeks vengeance when someone harms one of his children. Dennis Rocha, Laci Peterson's father, told Scott Peterson, "You're going to rot in hell..." for what he did to his daughter and Conner, his grandson. Amazingly Jesus forgives and loves Scott, Dennis and all the rest of us.

The resurrected Son of God gathered and comforted his discouraged and confused disciples. He confirmed his love for them and directed them to stay together and wait for the promised Holy Spirit. In answer to the prayer Jesus prayed the night before he was crucified God came to dwell in the church and the church was placed in God. People in the Roman world concluded that Jesus is Messiah, Son of God, raised from the dead because they saw the early church members, previously selfish and self-centered, loving the unlovable.

The resurrected Jesus is declared to be alive when members of his church share unconditional love with the world. Thanks to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we are freed from sin and empowered to love as God loves. This coming week, and for the rest of our lives, we can choose to release Jesus Christ in us to love God as he loves us. We also have the opportunity to share this divine love with the world. They need to know that they are loved and invited to come home to their heavenly Father. Many don't believe they are worth loving. Let's let them know that God loves them. If they ask how we can know such a thing we can then let them know how much He has loved us.

Let us focus on His unconditional love for everyone as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper this Thursday Night and our celebration of his resurrection next Saturday. If you have not seen the movie "The Passion", it will be played here at the sanctuary on Friday night at 7 pm by Pastor Green's church. Everyone is welcome. In fact, share God's love and invite a friend to all three events!

With deepest love in Christ our Savior,

Pastor Mel