

Luke 22:7–20 (LSB 630)
LCMS Eurasia Retreat
Litochoro, Greece
August 17, 2022

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

God's people are a pilgrim people, a people on a journey. Ever since Adam and Eve were evicted from the Garden of Eden, their descendants have been wandering all over the face of earth as foreigners. The LORD told Abraham in particular: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gen 12:1). There were several detours in Egypt, the one lasting 430 years. And then the LORD led the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt to the land promised to Abraham and his descendants forever.

Just before leaving Egypt, the LORD instituted the Passover meal to be celebrated by the people of Israel. After painting the doorframes with the lamb's blood, the people would eat the flesh of the roasted lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Ex 12:8). They were to eat it with belt fastened, sandals on feet, and staff in hand. And in haste (Ex. 12:11). There was no time to let the bread rise. There was no time to keep leftovers (Deut 16:3). The time had come to move to the promised land.

God led his people on this pilgrimage in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God dwelt with His people in the tabernacle. After the 40 year pilgrimage in the wilderness, God's people finally entered their permanent dwelling, and God found a more permanent home in the Temple. But all of this ended up not being so permanent after all. The exiles and the Jewish diaspora prove as much. God's people again became a pilgrim people, scattered over the face of the earth. They would return to the land of Israel and to the Temple

regularly, but even that was not permanent. The Gospel reading for this coming Sunday, the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, is from Luke 19, where Jesus weeps over Jerusalem knowing that not one stone would be left upon another. Thirty years later, the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. The land given to the Jews and the Temple, where God dwelled among them, was taken away. The Jews did not understand the things that make for peace. They did not understand the time of their visitation. They did not understand that the true Temple is not a building made with hands. The true temple is the body of Christ.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, to death. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.” They said to him, “Where will you have us prepare it?” He said to them, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, “The Teacher says to you, Where is the *guest room*, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?”

Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Luke 9:58). Our LORD is a guest on this earth, a pilgrim, in every sense: “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him” (John 1:10–11). Our LORD is a pilgrim on earth. His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). And so on the night He was betrayed, Jesus and His disciples had to celebrate the Passover in a guest room. But how appropriate! There was no time to linger. It was time to move on to the true promised land, the kingdom of God.

Our LORD took the Passover feast, this Pilgrim festival of the Jews and transformed it into a feast for God’s true Israel, the Church, as we continue our pilgrimage to life eternal. Jesus

took the bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” From now on, God’s people would eat the body of the true Lamb of God, slaughtered for the sins of the world on calvary’s cross. From now on, God’s people would drink the Lamb’s blood for the forgiveness of sins, painting it on the doorframes of our hearts so that death would pass over (LSB 458). Our LORD Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, where He rules the world He made and everything in it. And yet He remains with us, in His body and blood, until the end of the age.

God’s people are a pilgrim people. The Church of God, the true Israel, went from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, bringing Christ with them in the Word and in the Sacraments. They didn’t need much else. Jesus had already taught them that. The Twelve had been sent out with Jesus’s instruction: “Take nothing for your journey”... And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere. And when the 72 were appointed, they were told: “Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals.” Did they lack anything? No (Luke 22:35). The Lord provides His people with everything they need for the journey.

As missionaries, you know better than most how transient things can be. You understand that this life is a pilgrimage. Many of you have been uprooted from your homes, from your extended families, from your usual social circles. You have given up a life of worldly stability and familiarity to become strangers in a strange land. And even if you’re not a missionary, any kind of church work has this same tendency. We learn to value the one thing needful, because everything else is transitory. It’s all passing away. Our life really is a pilgrimage as we wander

from one place to the next as God directs us, from one station in life to the next, until we finally enter into eternal glory.

Like the people of Israel, our life is a pilgrimage, and the LORD provides for us on the way. On their way to the Promised land, the people of Israel ate the manna God gave them, the grain of heaven, the bread of the angels (Ps 78:24–25). On our way to the Promised land, on the Church's way to the Promised Land, our Lord, who is Himself the bread of life, gives us Himself. He gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink as sustenance on our way. Like Elijah in the desert at the end of his strength, the angel of the LORD comes to us with words of comfort, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you" (1 Kings 19:7). The body and blood of Jesus are "viaticum," provision for our journey towards life everlasting, a taste of eternity here in time.

No matter where you find yourself in this region, or in this world, dear people of God, remember that along with God's people of all time, you are pilgrims here. The only lasting home you have is the body of Christ. Wherever the body of Christ gathers around the Word and Sacraments, that is your home. Wherever you eat the Lamb's body and drink His blood, that is your dwelling because that is where God dwells with you. In this life we are all on a pilgrimage, traveling from one place to the next. But God does not leave us without provisions. Even here our Lord gives us with His very self, until that day when we shall behold Him face to face in eternal glory. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.