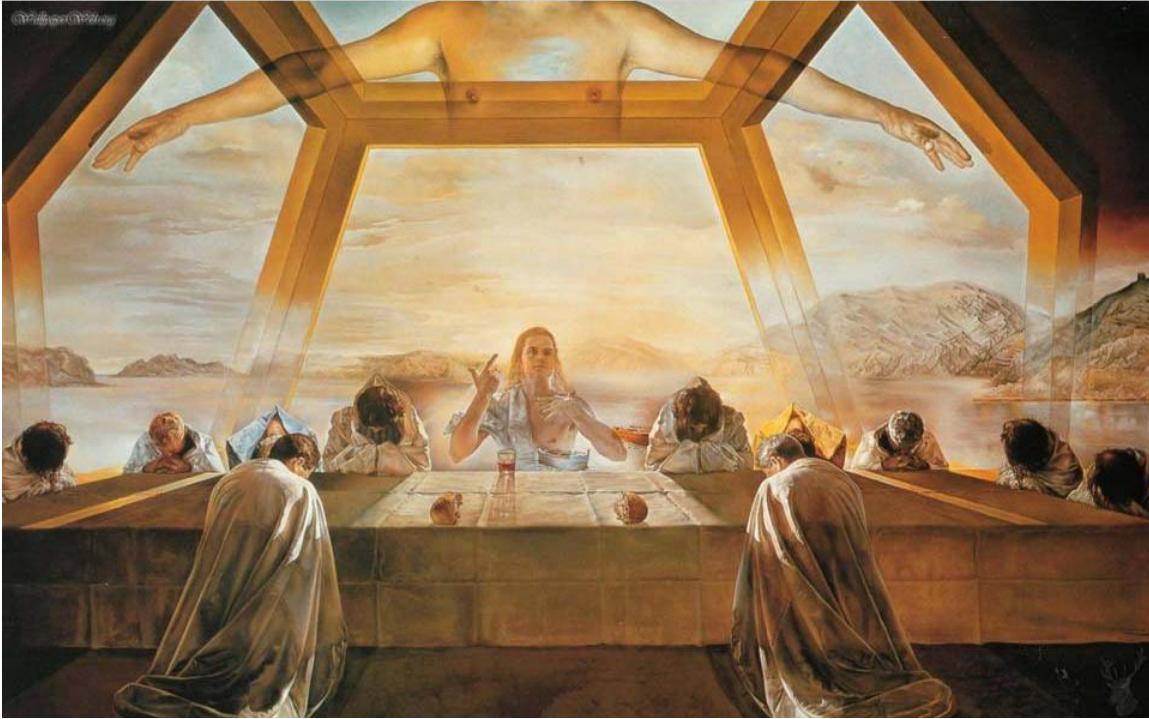


“Passed Over And Thru”

Dr. D. Jay Losher, Jr.
4 September 2011 + Crosspoint Presbyterian Church
Exodus 12:1-14 + Passover



On a whirlwind trip to our nation’s capital many years ago, Kathleen and I visited the National Gallery of Art. It was the first and only time I have ever had the privilege. Guidebooks and maps in hand, we were rushing from gallery to gallery glancing at the great works of art there, trying to get the whole effect by at least walking through every room.

Late in the day and deep in the basement maze, we were stopped in our tracks. Wearily we had turned a corner into a large, expansive gallery with walls which seemed blindingly white. On an Eastern wall precisely centered was one and only one painting – it almost covered the wall. Not in any of the guidebooks, it took us completely by surprise. It was well beyond anything I had seen before or since – one

of my few ecstatic experiences where I felt completely in the divine presence – a few moments in heaven.

It was shocking – it was mesmerizing – it was a mystery. I don't know how long we stared there meditating, transfixed. It seemed as though we had stepped out of time and space. The only thing we saw was the painting. The object of our reverie: *The Sacrament of the Last Supper* as depicted by Salvador Dali. The experience was — indescribably peace-filled and evocative of God's love and care.

None of the reproductions do this work of art any justice. They don't at all catch the original's power to transcend our mortal frame: the colors are beyond realistic – they glow, they shimmer. The single glass of wine is almost transparent and you can see Jesus through it. You would almost believe you could taste the bread.

Jesus' torso with arms outstretched floats over the scene – passing over it as a mother hen spreads her wings to gather in and protect her brood – showing simultaneously both the love of God in the cross of Jesus and the protective spirit of God passing over the community in this last Passover Seder Jesus celebrated with his followers.

Jesus was 'passing over' the disciples in protection and love.

Startling us, a loudspeaker announced the closing of the Gallery. We were shaken out of our reverie. The moment was gone. The encounter was over.

That Last Supper was above all else a Passover Seder. The elements of our communion are there to be seen. The origin of our communion service today has its roots not just to the time of Jesus

but they go back even further, more than 1300 years before Jesus walked the earth. Moses himself received from God the instruction for the first Passover. A perfect lamb without blemish was selected, slaughtered and its blood painted around and over the door of the house.



God was about to pass through the land of Egypt and kill the firstborn of every household, of every hutch, henhouse and of every stable ~ a tenth and final plague to convince the Pharaoh to free the Hebrew slaves. On account of the Pharaoh's stubbornness ~ because Pharaoh had refused to yield to gentler persuasion ~ God had been forced to resort to the worst persuasion possible – death itself in every household in the land. In order to protect the Hebrew families, when God saw the lamb's blood on the doorframe of a house, God would 'pass over' that house leaving it safe.

Each year the people of God are commanded to enact the Passover meal, to eat the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs to remember that God was 'passing thru' the land in judgment and God was 'passing over' the protected homes – protected by the blood of a lamb.



After the rushed and chaotic escape from Egypt the Hebrew children found themselves with their backs against the sea and pressed hard by the whole army of Pharaoh. The situation was desperate. Yet again, God intervened to protect the people of God. God always protects God's own.

God in the guise of a pillar of fire and smoke 'passed over and thru' and stood between the family of God and the armies of Egypt –



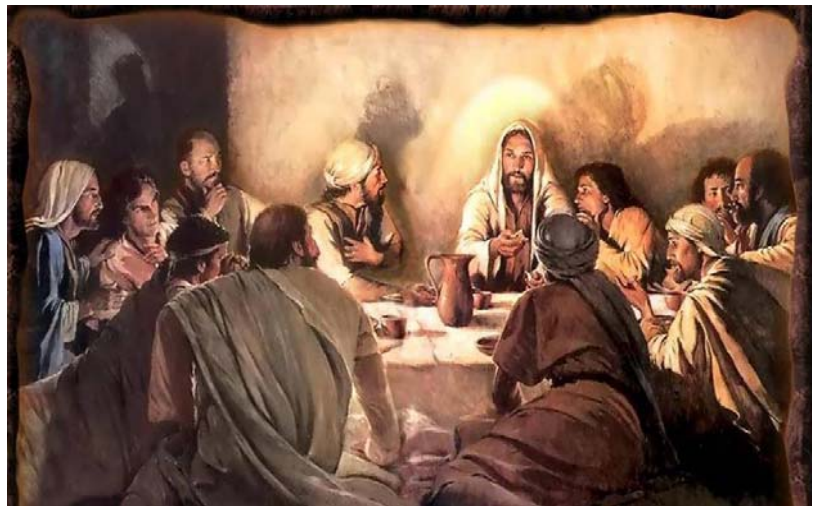
protecting them from harm. God opened the Red Sea so the people could 'pass thru' the sea on dry land, the waters held back like great walls ~ the people of God didn't even lose a single sandal in the mud.

When the family of God had 'passed thru' the waters, the

protective pillar of God released the armies. When they tried to 'pass thru' the waters, those same walls of water collapsed and smothered the entire Egyptian army of the Pharaoh.

God 'passes over and thru' protecting us even when we 'pass thru' the dangers of life. God is always there protecting us.

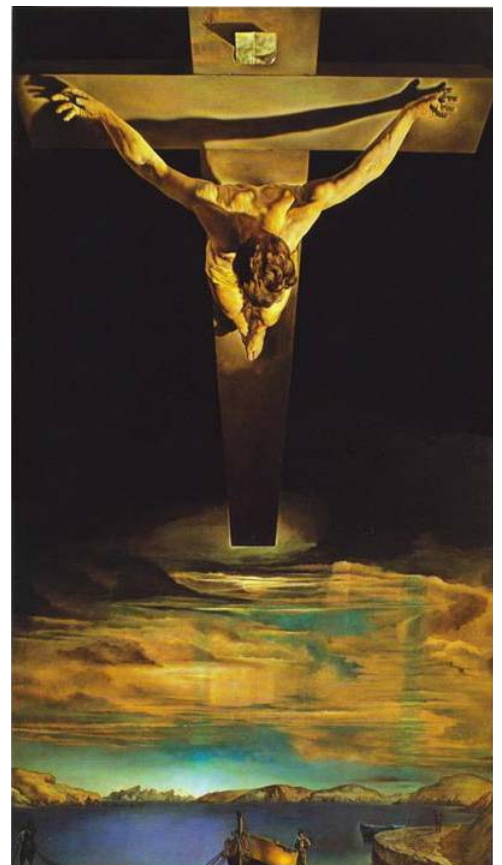
In Dali's *Last Supper*, we see Jesus instituting the last supper ~ a paschal meal, a Passover Seder. In our own communion, we take up the holy bread, we taste the consecrated wine. In a mystery of faith, we become those disciples gathered in the upper room sharing this sacred meal with our LORD and savior, redeemer and friend.



Just as in Dali's famous painting, here is Jesus with outstretched arms floating over us – hovering over us as a mother eagle spreads her wings to protect her brood – the protective spirit of God 'passing over' our community in Christ every time we come to the table.

This day Jesus himself is 'passing over' us disciples to protect us from harm and to share his love for us.

On the cross ~ the old rugged cross, we see Jesus, the lamb without blemish, the paschal lamb, the lamb of sacrifice. John's Gospel places the crucifixion at the exact day and hour of the slaughtering of the Passover lambs. Jesus is the Passover lamb – the lamb whose blood on the door frame wards off the final, the ultimate plague of death.

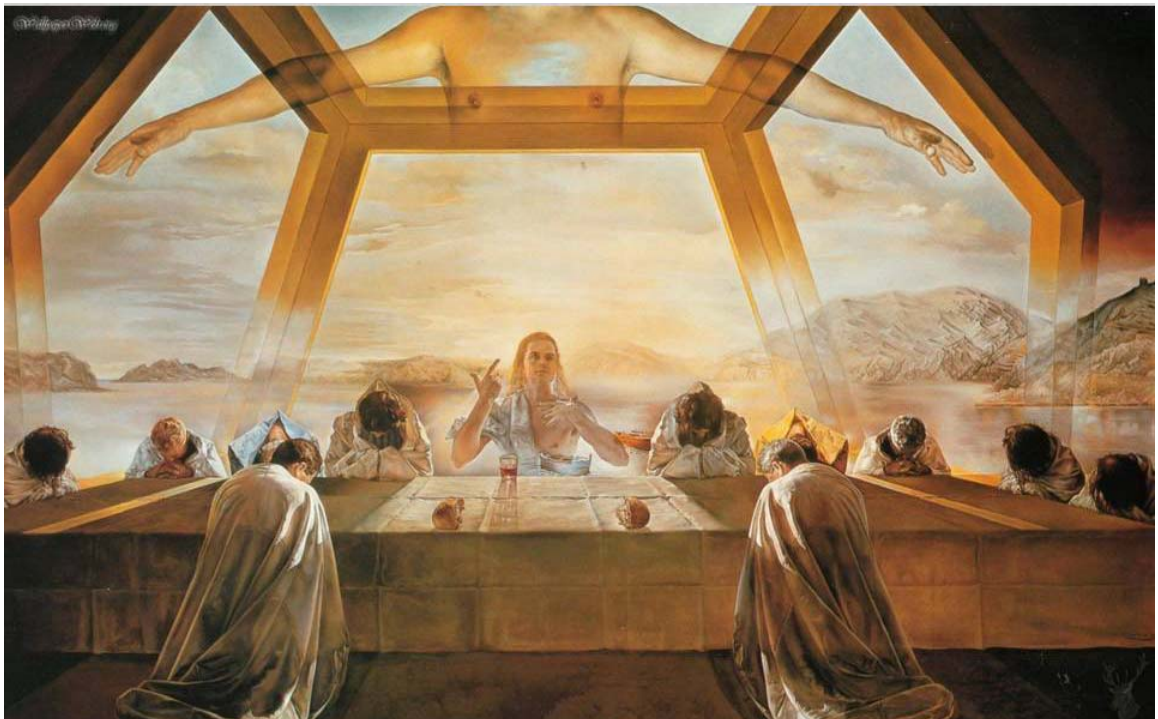


Jesus is the paschal lamb – the lamb of God whose blood on the doorposts of our hearts wards off the greatest evil there is: death, death for eternity, soul death. A potent symbol, the Lamb's blood which gives not only protection from ultimate harm but the greatest gift there is to have: eternal life, life for the ages, total living.



In our communion today we enact Jesus' last meal with his disciples. We are there with Jesus. He is here with us. It is indeed a Passover Seder. Yet Jesus extends its meaning to another level, a higher level, an eternal level. It is that level we seek for ourselves and all others:

As we 'pass thru' the turbulent and dangerous waters of life, we are not overcome or destroyed. God is always 'passing over' us, holding back the dangers ~ protecting us from the greatest evil and demonstrating God's unlimited love for us thru the only son Jesus.



Request has been made for us to continue a time of spontaneous prayer for discernment of direction from the Lord.