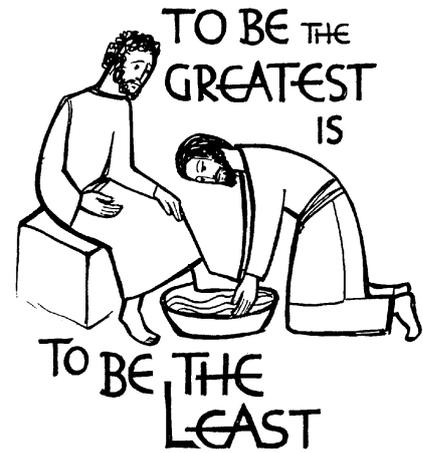


Worship @ Home

Maundy Thursday – 9th April 2020

On Maundy Thursday we would normally meet together to have supper, to remember the events of the night before Jesus died, to share communion. This year, because we are all in quarantine, we can't meet. We are at home – either with other members of our household, or on our own. The act of eating all together as a church community, or washing each other's feet, can only be imagined. If you are with others, you might like to gather round the supper table and share this act of reflection and meditation before or after your meal. If you are alone, you might like to eat your food mindfully, savouring each mouthful, remembering times when we have been able to sit round a table together. You might want to use parts of this material at different times during the day



Val

PREPARING

On this night, our Lord Jesus Christ said:
'A new commandment I give to you,
that you love each other, as I have loved you.'

HYMN

A new commandment
I give unto you
That you love one another
As I have loved you,
That you love one another
As I have loved you.
By this shall all know you are my disciples
If you have love one for another.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yy7W8avIXIY>

We are invited to begin this time of reflection with confession.
Take some time to sit in silence.
Reflect on the words of this hymn:
'A new commandment I give unto you – that you love one another, as I have loved you.'
Not one of us can do this.
We are all flawed human beings.
Love is difficult.
Think back over this day – one day is quite enough for confession!
Where have you showed love – even in tiny, humble acts of kindness?
Where have you showed unkindness?
Where have you spoken too quickly?
Where have you not spoken, when a kind word was needed.
Have your thoughts about others been inspired by love?
Or by irritation? Criticism? Judgementalism?

Just be honest about it in your own mind.

And offer it to God.

God's love is wide enough to absorb all our mistakes, all our unkindnesses.

That's what Holy Week is about.

You may want to say this prayer, from the liturgy for Maundy Thursday in the Methodist Worship Book:

Let us confess our sins to God and ask him to cleanse us.

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you,
against our neighbour,
and against each other,
in thought, word and deed,
in the evil we have done
and in the good we have not done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love
and marred your image within us.
We are sorry and ashamed
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and lead us out of darkness
to walk as children of light. Amen.**

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you,
that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another,
and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

This is Christ's gracious word:

'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

LISTENING

John 13.1-17,31b-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'

Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.'

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

REFLECTION

Afterwards

The principalities, the powers, the politicians,
The ones who pose in the spotlight
Centre-stage, and magnetise us as they stalk
Towards bankruptcy, murder, betrayal, suicide,
And other traditional exits...

The audience leaves, discussing nuances.
A scatter of sweet-papers, ash,
Smells hanging around behind. The audience leaves.

And in they come, rolling up their sleeves,
With hoovers and mops, buckets and brushes and Brasso,
Making it ready for the next time, nobody watching,
With small uncompetitive jokes, with backchat
About coach-trips, soaps, old men,
And a great sloshing of water.

This is where we ought to be. Not
Up on the stage with the rich and the Richards,
Rehearsing already their entrance for the next house,
The precise strut that registers power,

But down on our hands and knees,
Laughing, and mopping up.

U A Fanthorpe

In her poem, 'Afterwards', U A Fanthorpe challenges us to take our eyes off the stage, where the men strut their stuff in the spotlight, and look down to the floor, where the cleaners do all the humble, necessary, ordinary tasks that make public theatre possible.

'This is where we ought to be'.

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus too tells us that this is where we ought to be.

Not just tells us, but shows us.

John, the narrator, takes us through each move.

It is like a slow-motion, close-up clip from an art-house film.

He gets up from the table.

He takes off his outer robe.

He ties a towel around himself.

He pours water into a basin.

He begins to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel that is tied round him.

What an extraordinary image.

Washing feet was an act of hospitality performed by servants for honoured guests.

How did a man, a Jewish man from his hierarchical society of two thousand years ago, come to think of this dramatic way to embody the upside-down values of the kingdom of God?

Wind the film reel back to the previous chapter.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrives in Bethany.

He goes to dinner with Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

During that meal, Mary gets up from the table, anoints Jesus' feet with costly perfume, and wipes them with her hair.

In the same way, Jesus gets up from the table during his meal to wash the feet of his companions.

Just in case we haven't made the connection, John uses the same Greek verb in both stories.

Ekmasso.

To wipe.

Mary wipes Jesus' feet with her hair.

Jesus wipes the disciples' feet with a towel.

Jesus learned to wash feet from Mary.

A woman.

A friend.

And Mary is not the only woman in the gospels from whom Jesus is willing to learn.

Think of that other Mary, his mother, whose sensitivity to the embarrassment of the hosts at a wedding in Cana reminds her son that God is a God of hospitality - of feasting - of celebration.

Think of the Syro-Phoenician woman in Mark's gospel, whose feisty response to his tribal prejudice reminds him of the inclusiveness of God's love.

It is after that encounter that Jesus' ministry to the gentiles begins.

What is it that Jesus' is learning from these women?

Women whose voices and opinions were normally excluded from the male-dominated society of first-century Palestine!

Not just the importance of a symbolic gesture.

He is learning that God can be found in unexpected people and places.

He is learning that those at the bottom of the social heap have a perspective, an insight, a vision that is worth hearing.

He is learning that we are all – men and women, Jews and gentiles, master and disciples – partners in the task of discerning God’s love and sharing it with others.

It seems to me that this is an important lesson for all of us.

How have our perspectives changed during the last few weeks?

What have we learned from those who are not normally high status in our society?

What might we do differently when we come out on the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic?



HYMN

An upper room did our Lord prepare
for those he loved until the end:
and his disciples still gather there
to celebrate their risen friend.

A lasting gift Jesus gave his own:
to share his bread, his loving cup.
Whatever burdens may bow us down,
he by his cross shall lift us up.

And after supper he washed their feet,
for service, too, is sacrament.
In Christ our joy shall be made complete:
sent out to serve, as he was sent.

No end there is! We depart in peace,
he loves beyond the uttermost:
in every room in our Father's house
Christ will be there, as Lord and Host.

Fred Pratt Green

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHCcAfdVLTo>

PRAYING

Father, on this night, the night on which he was betrayed, your Son Jesus Christ washed his disciples' feet and said that they ought to wash one another's feet.

We commit ourselves to follow his example of love and service.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, humble us.

On this night, Jesus prayed for his disciples to be one.

We pray for the unity of your Church . . .

Lord, hear us.

Lord, unite us.

On this night, Jesus prayed for those who were to believe in him.

We pray for the mission of your Church . . .

Lord, hear us.

Lord, renew our zeal.

On this night, Jesus commanded his disciples to love, but suffered rejection himself.

We pray for those who are rejected and unloved . . .

Lord, hear us.

Lord, fill us with your love.

On this night, Jesus reminded his disciples that if the world hated them it first hated him.

We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith . . .

Lord, hear us.

Lord, increase our faith.

On this night, Jesus told his disciples that he was going to prepare a place for them.

We remember in your presence all who have died . . .

and those who have been bereaved . . .

Lord, hear us.

Lord, renew our hope and trust in you.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your Name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,

now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN

Look around you; can you see.

Times are troubled, people grieve.

See the violence, feel the hardness.

O my people, weep with me.

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

Walk among them; I'll go with you.

Reach out to them with my hands.

Suffer with me and together,

we will serve them, help them stand.

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

Forgive us, Father; hear our prayer.

We would walk with you, anywhere.

Through your suffering, with forgiveness,

take your life into the world.

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

Jodi Page Clark

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQDskTSGRtY&list=RDyQDskTSGRtY&start_radio=1&t=67

REMEMBERING

It is traditional on the evening of Maundy Thursday to go with Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemene, and to reflect on what lies ahead. This is called 'The Gospel of the Watch'. In many churches, the lights are dimmed, and the Communion Table is stripped of everything and left bare.

You may want to turn the lights down or off in your own home, and just keep a candle or a torch to read by.

You may want to clear an empty space around you, to represent the bleakness of what is to come for Jesus and his disciples. As you read the story of this evening, you may want to pause at the places indicated, to pray, or simply to sit in silence and share the experience in your imagination.

Matthew 26: 30-75

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written,

"I will strike the shepherd,

and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."

But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.' Peter said to him, 'Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you.' Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' Peter said to him, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And so said all the disciples.

Pause to reflect.

Is there a gap between what you say and what you do?

Of course there is – for all of us.

It's OK.

God knows.

God still loves us.

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.' Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

Pause to reflect.

Have you experienced a time when you have prayed in anguish?

Did it feel as though God answered your prayer?

Was the answer what you wanted to hear?

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.' At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you are here to do.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.

Pause to reflect.

Have you known what it is to be betrayed by someone you loved?

Was it a time when God felt really close?

Or unbearably absent?

Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?' At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Pause to reflect.

How do you normally deal with conflict?

Do you lash out in anger?

Or do you run away?

Are you a conflict avoider?

What would Jesus do?

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, 'This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days." ' The high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, 'I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.'

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?' They answered, 'He deserves death.' Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, 'Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?'

Pause to reflect.

Jesus is the still centre of this scene.

Somehow he is able to tolerate – even to absorb – the injustice and violence which are swirling around him.

He holds on to his own truth.

He endures what has to be endured.

Where does Jesus find the strength in this intolerable situation?

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, 'You also were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it before all of them, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' Again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.' Then he began to curse, and he

swore an oath, 'I do not know the man!' At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

Pause to reflect.

Who are you in this scene?

A bystander?

The servant girl?

Peter?

Inhabit this scene in your imagination.

What can you see?

What can you hear?

What can you smell?

How do you feel?

Imagine Jesus comes over to you.

You find the courage to look into his eyes.

What does he say to you?

Listen carefully.

This is a hard place to leave the story.

But we are all learning to inhabit hard places at this time.

Pray this final prayer.

And then put out the light.

May Jesus Christ,
Who for my sake became obedient unto death,
Even death on a cross,
Keep me and strengthen me
This night and for ever.
Amen.