

April 1, 2021
Maundy Thursday

Lectionary Passages:

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35



Selected Verses:

It is the passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night... The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you. –Exodus 12: 12-13

I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,
I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the Lord. – Psalm 116: 13, 17

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

– 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

(Jesus said,) “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.” – John 13: 34-34

Devotional:

Today is Thursday of Holy Week, better known as “Maundy Thursday.” The word *maundy* comes from the early English translation of the Latin word for *commandment*. At the start of the Passover meal, Jesus gave a new commandment—love one another. Jesus himself, and his life and sacrifice is an example of how we should love each other. In context, we show this love by serving one another as Jesus displayed by washing the disciples’ feet.

The lectionary for today gives us the earliest passages of the last supper and the last scripture passages. In 1 Corinthians, Paul was writing a letter to the church in Corinth. As a pastor, Paul was telling them how to gather and worship as a community. Some were bringing baskets of food, while others were going hungry. Paul described it as having fellowship hour where we all bring our own picnic lunches. Depending how large the meal, at some point people would remember Jesus’ last supper before his crucifixion.

The table was to bring people together. Instead it was showing the differences. As a new community following Jesus, they focused more on their differences than on what brings them together. Paul will later tell them that as a body’s hands and feet have different purposes, so do

the believers within the community. Each is gifted in different ways. Or, to put it another way, each displays love toward another in a different way. While we are to share your gifts, we need to realize the source of our blessings.

The focus is at the table. Here, we are encouraged to examine ourselves, and then come to the table with humility and grace. The person who had probably shared what happened at the table with Paul was John Mark, the writer of the gospel of Mark. As Paul started his ministry, Mark was one of his companions. After a while, they went their own ways. Mark went to write the gospel, Paul continued on his missionary journeys. Mark had been at the upper room. He had heard the words Jesus spoke. Years later, in a letter to one of his churches, Paul wrote the words used each time the Lord's Table is remembered.

The other lectionary passage is from John's gospel, the last of the four gospels written. John was also present at the Last Supper. John was the beloved disciple who Jesus told from the cross to care for Mary. Tradition has it that John and Mary lived the rest of their lives in Ephesus. So, John's writing of Jesus life, death and resurrection would have been influenced by his own stories along with Mary's. When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, we tend to think of the twelve. Though, there were probably more than twelve disciples in the upper room. It would have been the close community. This would have included the women who witnessed the cross.

As I read the passage of the foot washing, I wonder if it is Mary's story. As the mother of Jesus, on that Passover meal, Jesus knelt and washed her feet. Jesus took the role of a servant. This is obvious in the fact that he took off his outer robe and wrapped a towel around himself. It becomes clear when Peter will not allow his master to wash his feet. There is something humbling about the Master washing the feet. This job that was given to the usually unknown, maybe unnamed, servant was done by Jesus.

This is Jesus' example of loving one another. Find ways to share your love with others that truly serves them and take the attention away from you. In a time when the church is often criticized, what would displaying this type of love look like in our community? These actions of love are done in response to God's great love for us. In the death of Jesus Christ, with his blood poured out and body broken, passed over our sins. God remembers us, and calls us to share His love with others.

On this Maundy Thursday, may you reflect on the Passover meal and the Last Supper. May you reflect on the love God has for you. He came and took the form of servant, to the point of death, even death on the cross for you. No greater love has anyone. May we truly love one another as God has loved us.

Prayer:

Eternal God, whose covenant with us is never broken, we confess that we fail to fulfill your will. Though you have bound yourself to us, we will not bind ourselves to you. In Jesus Christ, you serve us freely, but we refuse your love and withhold ourselves from others. We do not love you fully or love one another as you command. In your mercy, forgive and cleanse us. Lead us once again to fellowship with one another and unite us to Christ, who is the bread of life and the vine from which we grow in grace. Amen