

Maundy Thursday

Hymn

Great God, your love has called us here,
as we, by love, for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear,
though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind
your call to hear, your love to find.

Then take the towel, and break the bread,
and humble us, and call us friends.
Suffer and serve till all are fed,
and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings,
to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

Great God, in Christ you set us free
your life to life, your joy to share.
Give us your Spirit's liberty
to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that can faith can do
while love is making all things new.

Tonight, Maundy Thursday, is the night when Jesus instituted the Eucharist. I have a Chalice and paten in front of me, as we remember the words of the hymn

Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace. Some words 1 Corinthians.....

Beloved: ²³I 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, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'²⁵In 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.'²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

After much pondering I decided not to celebrate the Eucharist tonight or on Easter Day, for the simple reason that I am not able to celebrate it with you. The chalice and paten are here to remind us that "Though we are many we are one body because we all share the same bread" and I look forward to the day when we can meet again to celebrate together. But in the meantime here's a prayer by Alan Amos called 'A locked church'

Dear Lord, the church is locked,
but let my heart be open to your presence
There let us make, you and I, your Easter garden;
Plant it with flowers
And let the heavy stone be rolled away.

I pray that during this Maundy Thursday Service our hearts may be open to receive afresh all that God longs to give us and that during our worship in the days ahead whatever lies heavy on our hearts may be rolled away.

Collect for Maundy Thursday

Let us pray that we may love one another as Christ has loved us.

God our Father,
you have invited us to share in the supper
which your Son gave to his church to proclaim his death until he comes:
may he nourish us by his presence, and unite us in his love;
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen

A reading from John's Gospel – Alison Peacock

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

"Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Reflection - Tom Studman

Greetings in these strange times. I have been fascinated by the things I am learning about myself in this lock-down. My weaknesses, my longings, hopes and concerns. Face to face contact is missed greatly. I am thankful for the different ways we can meet up online. Our desire for human contact is strong. I recently took comfort in a brilliantly produced rendition of 'In Christ Alone' produced by David Wesley, and his virtual choir. With permission granted, here is a clip.

Faces bring us comfort. Gazing at the face of Christ represented in icons and artwork can bring great solace. The Godly Play network has made a set of Faces of Christ available online.

I was drawn to the last supper... Jesus breaking bread and sharing wine. We have reached this part of our Easter story. My longing to receive the Eucharist is strong at this time.... I know many of you feel the same.

However, in these times of isolation, our Gospel passage offers fresh comfort, through the foot washing narrative. On Monday we read about the anointing of Jesus by Mary. This lavish act of love, generously pouring pure perfumed nard onto Jesus' feet. A fine example of loving God and the reciprocal nature of our relationship with Jesus. Mary comforted Jesus and now during the Last Supper Jesus washed and comforted His followers.

Jesus rises from the meal and takes off His outer garments. To everybody's surprise, He starts to wash the disciple's feet. Reviving and refreshing them. Then gently drying their feet, He comforts all but one, Judas the betrayer, reminding them they are spiritually clean. I wonder how clean we feel in the company of Jesus today... Jesus returns to the table and leaves us with much to ponder about this strange act of humble service...

Jesus, despite being Teacher and Lord, choose a beautiful loving act of service. Our servant King comforts us and compels us to love and serve one another. I encourage us to take time to imaginatively enter this story and sense Jesus' deeply insightful touch. Let yourself be washed by Him. Gaze into the face of Jesus... teacher... Lord... lover of our souls. Ponder what Jesus means to you... Listen, deep within, to His command to love one another as He has loved us.

As we arise from this imaginative engagement with the story, and return to the strange times we live in, may Jesus' command guide us onwards. As we hope in Christ alone during these tough times, let us love God and one another. Continue those acts of love; lighting a candle in our window, calling a friend, shopping for neighbours, clapping the NHS on the doorstep. I pray we may encounter God afresh and love more deeply in these strange times.

Prayers of Intercession – Tom Phipps

In the power of the Spirit let us pray to the Father through Christ the saviour of the world.

Father, on this, the night he was betrayed,
your Son Jesus Christ washed his disciples' feet.
We commit ourselves to follow his example of love and service.

We pray for all involved in caring for others.
For those who work in the NHS, for care workers in residential homes
and for those who care for the elderly and vulnerable in their own homes.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us.

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

We pray for the unity of your Church.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us.

On this night, he prayed for those who were to believe through his disciples' message.

We pray for the mission of your Church in these challenging times.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us.

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

We pray for the rejected and the unloved, the fearful and the anxious.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us.

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

We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us.

On this night, he accepted the cup of death
and looked forward to the new wine of the kingdom.

We remember those who have died in the peace of Christ.

Remembering especially Paula Berry, John Rainford and Wally Marshall

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us.

We join our prayers together in the words our Saviour gave us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Tonight we remember Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, asking his disciples "Will you not watch with me for one hour?" You may like to take some time to quietly wait with our Lord during the course of this evening and may find the following words helpful.

O Christ, pouring yourself out, love drained to the last drop.

We adore you

O Christ, kneeling as a servant, washing the disciples' feet

We adore you

O Christ, taking bread and wine,
crystal clear in your awareness of the work you must complete

We adore you

O Christ, entering Gethsemane, falling on your face to pray,
uncontainable in your broken heart

We adore you

Dismissal Gospel - Anne

When the disciples had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus prayed to the Father, 'If it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me.' He said to his disciples, 'How is that you were not able to keep watch with me for one hour? The hour has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to the power of sinners.'

Christ was obedient unto death. Go in his peace.

Hymn

O thou, who at thy Eucharist didst pray
that all thy church might be for ever one,
grant us at every Eucharist to say
with longing heart and soul, 'Thy will be done':
O may we all one bread, one body be,
through this blest sacrament of unity.

So, Lord, at length when sacraments shall cease,
may we be one with all thy church above,
one with thy saints in one unbroken peace,
one with thy saints in one unbounded love:
more blessed still, in peace and love to be
one with the Trinity in Unity.