

Call to Worship

Beloved Ones, this is the beginning of our journey, walking with Jesus to the cross. We will remember with the bread and the cup his final meal with his friends. We will remember that his friends left him alone in his hour of need. As light fades into darkness, we will remember that our lives are both light and dark and that darkness calls forth from us our deepest trust and hope.

Litany of Confession

We come this night to begin our last steps to the cross. We have walked, often sightless, on the rocky road with Jesus. During this journey we have slipped and fallen. We have wanted to give up. Our feet are sore. We are tired. We ask God to help us on this last mile not to falter.

(silent reflection)

Holy God, your love for us overflows, but we have not loved you with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength. We beseech you, O Holy One, **have mercy on us.**

Holy One, we fail to remember that we are inextricably bound one with each other. We beseech you, O Holy One, **have mercy on us.**

Holy One, we are stubborn and cling to our old ways. We beseech you, O Holy One, **have mercy on us.**

Holy One, remind us that we live for you and not for ourselves or by ourselves. We beseech you, O Holy One, **have mercy on us.**

Holy One, we have lost sight of our collective power we hold when we strive to work together towards a common purpose. We beseech you, O Holy One, **have mercy on us.**

May the Holy One, our God, have mercy upon us and forgive us of our sins through the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn | *What Wondrous Love is This*

v. 1-2

ELW 666

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray together our prayer of the day: Holy God, source of all love, **on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave us a new commandment, to love one another as he loves us. Write this commandment in our hearts, and give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

Children's Message | Exodus 12:1-14

First Reading | 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

I passed on to you what I received from the Lord. On the night the Lord Jesus was handed over to his enemies, he took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it. He said, "This is my body. It is given for you. Every time you eat it, do it in memory of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup. He said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do it in memory of me." You eat the bread and drink the cup. When you do this, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

Pastoral Reflection | *A Special Meal*

Life is full of special meals: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter feasts; birthday and anniversary dinners; pancake breakfasts and fish fries; backyard grill-outs; good 'ole Lutheran potlucks. These meals are made special for a variety of reasons: the specific food served, the occasion around which it's celebrated, the people who have gathered. These special meals are sacred times, times when we encounter the holy presence of God.

I invite you to think of a special meal in your life. If you are able to worship with others today, I'd invite you to share your memories and stories during this time by pausing this video... and if not, I invite you to call up a friend or family member today or tomorrow and share a memory or story with them, and ask them to share one in return!

For now, I'll share a personal story with you about a special pre-Christmas meal... and no, it's not the fast-food Christmas Eve meal that I've talked about probably a million times already... This was a breakfast meal. On the last day of school before winter break, my family would get up extra early to enjoy a special breakfast together... at Burger King. Despite the fact that there were 5 of us, we'd squish around a small table for 4 where we'd eat and talk about anything that came to mind. Every year I would get the same thing: a bacon, egg, and cheese sandwich and cini-minis (mini cinnamon rolls) to share.

It's such a funny thing to do -- breakfast at Burger King -- but we did it *every year*... even when I was in college and came back home for winter break. But this was a special meal for me and my family. What made it special was the food we ate (albeit unhealthy food),

the occasion for the meal, and the people we shared it with. This was a sacred, holy meal.

When we are able to gather together for worship, we also celebrate a sacred, holy meal. A meal that Jesus celebrated, in remembrance of the Passover during the time of Moses. In this meal, Jesus and his disciples remembered God's deliverance -- how God remembered and delivered God's people out from the crushing hand of Pharaoh, the crushing hand of slavery. On the night Jesus was betrayed by one of his own, he celebrated the Passover meal, he celebrated God's delivering power... as he took bread and wine... and commanded his disciples and us to do the same.

And so now when we are able to gather for worship, we also celebrate a meal of deliverance. A meal in which we remember and feel and taste the grace we receive from God... we celebrate our deliverance from the crushing power of sin and death.

During this Maundy Thursday service, we would usually celebrate this meal together; however, our current context has made this rather impossible. But don't be disheartened or dismayed -- the same grace we receive in the bread and wine, we receive in many other ways as well: in the reading and proclamation of the Good News; in loving and serving one another; in offering forgiveness and mercy to each other; and in receiving those things -- whether that's on an hourly, daily, or weekly basis.

We may not be able to celebrate this special meal together... yet... but in the meantime, let's remember *why* we celebrate it and *what* it is that makes it special. It's the food we share, the occasion we remember, and the people who gather together.

Hymn of Response | *What Feast of Love*

v. 1 + 3

ELW 487

Gospel | John 13:1-17 (NIRV)

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world. It was time for him to go to the Father. Jesus loved his disciples who were in the world. So he now loved them to the very end.

They were having their evening meal. The devil had already tempted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. He had urged Judas to hand Jesus over to his enemies. Jesus knew that the Father had put everything under his power. He also knew he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the meal and took off his outer clothes. He wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a large bowl. Then he began to wash his disciples' feet. He dried them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

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

Jesus replied, “You don’t realize now what I am doing. But later you will understand.”

“No,” said Peter. “You will never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you can’t share life with me.”

“Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet! Wash my hands and my head too!”

Jesus answered, “People who have had a bath need to wash only their feet. The rest of their body is clean. And you are clean. But not all of you are.” Jesus knew who was going to hand him over to his enemies. That was why he said not everyone was clean.

When Jesus finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes. Then he returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord.’ You are right. That is what I am. I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet. So you also should wash one another’s feet. I have given you an example. You should do as I have done for you. What I’m about to tell you is true. A slave is not more important than his master. And a messenger is not more important than the one who sends him. Now you know these things. So you will be blessed if you do them.

Gospel Reflection | *Greatness Redefined* by Nigel Varndell

Why did you wash their feet?

I don’t understand, it makes no sense.

Why did you do something so demeaning,
so distasteful,

when you did not have to?

Why humble yourself and wash the feet of your own disciples?

You are the Messiah,

it makes no sense for you, of all people,

to do something that should be done by the least of all people,
not by the greatest.

It is not what we want our Messiahs to do.

Unless...

unless we have got it wrong and that,

somehow this is a measure of what Messiah means?

Not that it is defined in greatness

but that somehow, in your world the first will be last,
and the greatest, least and servant of all?

But if we are to follow you,

does it mean that we must follow your example too?
Are you suggesting that we too should make ourselves humble?
That we must wash the feet of the people whom we would rather ignore,
or scapegoat,
or deride?

Must we too become the servants of the least among us?
the refugee,
the disabled,
the homeless,
the addicted,
the anti-social,
the child?

Was that what all of this was about?
To try and put us in our rightful place,
not at the centre of our own world,
but at the centre of yours,
where we are no longer the most important person?
Is that it?
Were you trying to teach us this simple truth,
that other people,
all other people,
should matter too?

Is that why you washed their feet?

Hymn of Response | *Love Consecrates the Humblest Act*

ELW 360

Affirmation of Faith | *Sharing the Bread and Wine* by Frank Hendersen

**We believe that bread comes from grain
that grows in the wind and the sun and the rain
with the farmers' help.**

**We believe that bread comes from love
the love of God
the love of the farmer
the love of the baker's hands
the love of those who bring it to us.**

**We believe that bread can be
and should be broken
and shared**

**and given to all persons
until all have enough.**

**We believe that Jesus loved bread
and took it
and broke it
and blessed it
and gave it to his disciples.**

**We believe enough in bread
to want to receive it from Jesus
to want it to nurture us.
We want to be bread for others.
We believe the Spirit will help us.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Praying separately in our homes and together in the Spirit, let us pray for the church, the earth, the world, and all who are in need.

For the church around the world we pray:

Strengthen all the baptized with the light of hope in you, despite an inability to gather for worship. Guide bishops and pastors as they make decisions for their communities. At this time of great distress, give preachers the courage to speak your word with mercy and might. As at the annunciation you sent an angel to bring good news to Mary, so send an angel now to the world with your gospel of peace and love. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the earth we pray:

Give your wisdom to humanity to care for the lands and the seas, with all their living things. Provide rich soil for crops to grow. Bring rain to lands suffering drought. Protect hills and shorelines from damage caused by erosion. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the nations of the world we pray:

Give your peace to the nations of the world. Call a halt to all violence, terrorism, and warfare, at this time and forever. Anoint us with your Spirit of social justice, that we care for the poor. Empower heads of state and legislators to enact adequate and helpful

policies for the health and welfare of their citizens. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Facing the coronavirus we pray:

Be present with those who have contracted the virus, those who are quarantined, those stranded away from home, those who have lost their employment, and those who are filled with fear. Console those whose futures are disrupted or seem empty. Support health professionals and medical researchers as they address the pandemic. Comfort our distressed world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For all in need we pray:

Heal those who suffer from anxiety and disease. Accompany all who today will die. Support physicians, nurses, therapists, home health aides, and all who tend to human bodies. Come quickly to all who seek your presence this day, especially those whose names we call out to you now. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

United with all who have died in the faith, especially those we remember now, we pray that at the end we will join with them in your presence. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray...

Sending Hymn | *Go to Dark Gethsemane*

v.1-3

ELW 347

Blessing

So may the blessing of the God who calls the people out of Egypt call us out from our comfort and our safety to embrace a journey of challenge and risk.

May the blessing of the Son who kneels and washes our feet call us out from our comfort and our safety to embrace and serve those we meet on the journey.

May the blessing of the Spirit who weaves dreams of a new community call us out from our comfort and our safety to provide welcome and hospitality to strangers as well as friends.

Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

Stripping of the Altar

After the Last Supper, less than 24 hours remained in the earthly life of our Lord. Events moved rapidly: prayer in Gethsemane, betrayal by Judas, arrest, mock trial, painful beating, the death march to Golgotha, and execution. As his life was stripped from him, so we strip our altar of the signs of life to symbolize His purposeful, redemptive suffering and death for us.

Psalm 22

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

3 Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

4 In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.

5 To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

6 But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.

7 All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

8 "Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"

9 Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.

10 On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

11 Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

12 Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

13 they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
15 my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.

16 For dogs are all around me;
a company of evildoers encircles me.
My hands and feet have shriveled;
17 I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me;
18 they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

19 But you, O Lord, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
20 Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life from the power of the dog!
21 Save me from the mouth of the lion!

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.
22 I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
23 You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
24 For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me,
but heard when I cried to him.

****Note: Worship will continue tomorrow on Good Friday***