

1st April 2021 – Maundy Thursday

Rev Michael Payne

Call to Worship

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.'

StF 499 – Great God your love has called us here

- 1) 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.
- 2) We come with self-inflicted pains
Of broken trust and chosen wrong,
Half-free, half-bound by inner chains,
By social forces swept along,
By powers and systems close confined,
Yet seeking hope for humankind.
- 3) Great God, in Christ you call our name,
And then receive us as your own,
Not through some merit, right or claim,
But by your gracious love alone;
We strain to glimpse your mercy-seat,
And find you kneeling at our feet.
- 4) 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.
- 5) Great God, in Christ you set us free
Your life to live, your joy to share;
Give us your Spirit's liberty
To turn from guilt and dull despair
And offer all that faith can do,
While love is making all things new.

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Prayer of Adoration & Praise

On this troublesome night we pause and focus our mind and being upon you our God.

God of Eternity, God of all Ages, God of the Now we recognize your love expressed in Jesus.

God of Creation, God of Salvation, God of inspiration we worship you and express our love for you in response to your love for us.

God of Miracle, God of Power, and God of Peace we worship you and offer ourselves to you for you have offered yourself, in Jesus, for us.

God of Grace, God of Judgement, God of mercy on this night we pause for you are the God worthy of praise and adoration.

Prayer of Confession & Collect

God of God's, Lord of Lord's in your presence we are still.....

We offer our sinful self for your forgiveness and cleansing. 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.

God our Father, you have invited us to share in the ministry which your Son gave to his Church. Nourish us, we pray, 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.**

StF 289 – When my love to Christ grows weak

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| 1) When my love for Christ grows weak,
When for deeper faith I seek,
Then in thought I go to thee,
Garden of Gethsemane. | 4) There behold his agony,
Suffered on the bitter tree;
See his anguish, see his faith,
Love triumphant still in death. |
| 2) There I walk amid the shades,
While the lingering twilight fades,
See that suffering, friendless One,
Weeping, praying there alone. | 5) Then to life I turn again,
Learning all the worth of pain,
Learning all the might that lies
In a full self-sacrifice. |
| 3) When my will to love grows weak,
When for stronger faith I seek,
Hill of Calvary, I go
To your scenes of fear and woe; | 6) And I praise with firmer faith
Christ who vanquished pain and death;
And to Christ enthroned above
Raise my song of selfless love. |

John Reynell Wreford CCL No. 515642

Reading: John 13:1-30 Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

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. I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfil the scripture, "The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.'

The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘Do quickly what you are going to do.’ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, ‘Buy what we need for the festival’; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

Sermon

“And it was night,” was how the passage we heard ended. But it’s beginning to get dark now. The story of Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem is about to take a very dark turn. Today we mark Maundy Thursday as we remember how Jesus instituted the breaking of bread. That holy meal which at its very least calls to mind Christ's sacrifice. Tomorrow we will remember the events surrounding the crucifixion of God's Son. We will remember how the Sun refused to shine. But right now we are in the twilight; it’s getting darker.

We are somewhere between Jesus' glorious entry into Jerusalem and his tragic death on a cross. Somewhere between the shouts of "Hosanna" and the cry of "Crucify him." And we are headed towards that darkest of all afternoons. It's getting dark and it will get darker still. But we like the dark.

You may think that’s a strange thing to say for the evenings are getting lighter and we are looking forward to being outside in the evenings after months of being indoors. When it gets dark we shall once more hide away to be secure in our homes. What do you mean “we like the dark we like the long light evenings?” But I don’t mean “we” as a local collection of human beings, but “we” as a full generic term. It’s not the, "Isn't it a shame that it is getting dark," that I am referring to in terms of long or short evenings. It is the figurative darkness I am referring to; the darkness of society; the quick knee jerk reaction to events; the blame culture, the mistrust of others. We are a people of the dark.

Our fascination with Judas is an example of this attraction to the shadows. Ask people who their favourite disciple is and they will say Peter, or Matthew, James, John, Andrew or Mary Magdalene, but none will say "Judas" for he is the one who betrayed Jesus. The one whose very name means "betrayal" cannot be our favourite. Yet the darkest of the disciples, if the truth were told, is the one that intrigues us most. When the play writers dramatize Jesus' passion it's the Judas character that is developed the most. The actor playing Judas gets the best part from a thespian’s point of view. The writer has spent more time trying to figure Judas out than any other. What was his motive for betrayal is the mystery they seek to solve – but we shall never know.

Judas fascinates us because he is the most human of the characters. After all Judas was the darkest of all the disciples and people are really attracted to the dark. Considering the evil that Judas embodies, it is amazing how gracious Jesus was to Judas. If you read the Gospel of John carefully you can see what I mean. Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him. Yet he reached out to Judas and made him a follower. Jesus placed him in charge of the money for the poor. Jesus even washed the feet of Judas. Jesus offered Judas every grace that he offered the other disciples. Right up to the moment when Judas made that final decision to betray Jesus.

In our scripture reading it is clear that Jesus knew exactly what was going on in the heart of Judas. As Jesus sat down with his disciples he told them that one of them would betray him. When the beloved disciple, John, asked who it was Jesus was able to give him a sign. Jesus dipped a morsel of bread and gave it to Judas. But even this action did not convince the disciples of what Judas was about for it was so subtle.

We see this morsel as merely a sign to the disciple on Christ's breast as to who would betray him. But it was more. That gesture was also a sign of friendship. In the culture of that time and place it was a token of friendship to give a choice morsel of food to someone. This was an act of grace on Jesus' part. The giving of the last Rolo to the one you love.

Perhaps this gesture of giving food may have even been a final opportunity for Judas to repent of the evil he had planned. Jesus knew Judas would betray him, yet he still reached out in love. Despite this token of love Judas went about his plans to betray Jesus. It says that after the morsel, Satan entered Judas. At the moment that Jesus was reaching out in love, Judas was resolving to betray him. It is no wonder that Judas later completed his betrayal with a kiss. Judas took that sign of friendship and went out to sell Jesus to the highest bidder. And as Judas went out it was night. Like us he was attracted to the dark. So he went out into the dark and betrayed his Lord. Through the betrayal by Judas, Jesus died. Through Judas' flirtation with the powers of darkness Jesus was nailed to a cross. Judas loved the dark, he was attracted to it; and so the only sinless person in the world died a cruel death. Because of Judas' sin, Jesus died. But Jesus also died for Judas' sin.

It's getting dark. And we have all had our flirtations with darkness. Because of those sins, Jesus died. Because of our sin, Jesus died. But Jesus also died for our sins, for our salvation. That is why we pause before bowl of water and bread and wine; we have not paused for foot washing but we pause for "Soul washing"; each of our souls is dirty and we need Jesus to cleanse them. Remember how Peter reacted when Jesus came to wash his feet? He said, "No Lord, you will not wash my feet." But Jesus said, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." We must come to Christ to be washed clean of our sins. We must come to the light because we have loved the darkness.

In the taking of a morsel of bread we are opening ourselves to the love of Jesus offers to us; as offered to Judas. In this moment pause to have your soul washed. And remember how Jesus washed his disciples' feet because he loved them. He washes your soul because he loves you. In this moment pause before the symbol of forgiveness from God and take a piece bread, a morsel of bread, like the one given by the betrayed to the betrayer. We will sin again but Jesus still gives to us a morsel of bread because he loves us even knowing what we shall do so soon. Take, eat and remember.

StF 569 – An upper room did our Lord prepare

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| 1) An Upper Room did our Lord prepare
For those he loved until the end;
And his disciples still gather there
To celebrate our Risen Friend. | 3) And after supper he washed their feet,
For service, too, is sacrament;
In him our joy shall be made complete -
Sent out to serve, as he was sent. |
| 2) 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. | 4) No end there is! We depart in peace;
He loves beyond the uttermost;
In every room in our Father's house
He will be there, as Lord and Host. |

Prayers of Intercession

For many people the last twelve months have been dark days; days of isolation, days of sadness, days of pain, anxiety, uncertainty. Yet there have been days of refreshment, moments of celebration, occasions of joy, experiences of grace. On this Maundy Thursday we remember those who have lived in and through darkness.

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.

L: Lord, hear us **R: Lord, humble us**

On this night, Jesus prayed for his disciples to be one. We pray for the unity of your Church ; we remember the congregations in our Circuit; we remember our neighbouring fellowships of Christian faith; may the unity in which we exist be expressed through each of us.

L: Lord, hear us **R: Lord, unite us**

On this night, Jesus prayed for those who were to believe in him. We pray for the mission of your Church in these days of change and rebirth may we look to you for guidance as to how we express your love in our communities.

L: Lord, hear us **R: 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; those who in these months of isolation have been forgotten, abused, despised and injured.

L: Lord, hear us **R: 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 in places around the world and in our own communities.

L: Lord, hear us **R: 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 . . .

L: Lord, hear us **R: Lord, renew our hope and trust in you**

The Lord's Prayer

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.**

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.**

The Peace

On this night, our Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.' The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Blessing

The one who has met with us is the one who goes with us at all times and in all places. The Saviour who gives us freedom is the one who will open closed doors. The Lord who invites our obedience is the one who equips us for service. The Spirit who transforms our worship is the one who empowers us for witness. The Father who pours his love over us is the one who will love us now and will love us forever. **Amen**

Reading: Mark 14:32-36

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.'

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.'

StF 269 – To see the King of heaven fall

- 1) To see the King of heaven fall
In anguish to his knees,
The Light and Hope of all the world
Now overwhelmed with grief.
What nameless horrors must he see,
To cry out in the garden:
'Oh, take this cup away from me -
Yet not my will but yours,
Yet not my will but yours.'
- 2) To know each friend will fall away,
And heaven's voice be still,
For hell to have its vengeful day
Upon Golgotha's hill.
No words describe the Saviour's plight -
To be by God forsaken
Till wrath and love are satisfied
And every sin is paid
And every sin is paid.
- 3) What took him to this wretched place,
What kept him on this road?
His love for Adam's curséd race,
For every broken soul.
No sin too slight to overlook,
No crime too great to carry,
All mingled in this poisoned cup -
And yet he drank it all,
The Saviour drank it all,
The Saviour drank it all.