Maundy Thursday 2020

Welcome to my kitchen!

Get a bowl of water a bar of soap and a towel. A plate with some bread on it and a cup – with wine or juice. For hygiene sake may want to each have your own piece of bread and your own glass, your own towel.

In many ways we are going back to the original last supper and the last night Jesus spent with his disciples. What we call The Lords’ supper, or the last supper, communion or the Eucharist, or breaking bread, derives from this night. The church through the centuries has added its traditions and rules and each church has its own practice. As the Reformed Church we always want to test church traditions and whether they go back to scripture. In many ways we are going back to the heart of scripture – a basic gathering round a kitchen table, remembering the love and grace of Jesus, eating with him, his spiritual presence with us still and being inspired by his Spirit for all that life may bring us – especially, as now in times of trial and testing – remembering that Jesus shared this meal with friends the night before he would be crucified.

Maundy is derived from the first words of the traditional Latin anthem ‘Mandatum novum do vobis (a new commandment I give to you). Remember this was all about love – the love of Jesus to his followers, his command to love one another, not to Lord it over one another nor to think you were any more special than another person but instead to serve one another as symbolised in the washing of feet.

And then a meal to remember Jesus who through love he gave himself for us – to forgive us, to accept us – even those who betrayed him or denied him or deserted him. In the midst of his trial in the night before he died this would be a night of love.

Let us pray;

Leader:
We join a solemn journey of three days[[1]](#endnote-1)
that has changed the world
and our own lives.
Followers of Jesus have been taking this journey
since his first followers took it, long ago.

*(pause)*

This is the night of love.

*(pause)*

On the night Jesus took a towel and basin,
and washed his disciples' feet.
On this night he told them to do the same for others
to show their love for him
and for one another.
This is the night of love.

On this night, Jesus broke bread and shared wine with his followers
for the last time,
and invited them to remember him
to encounter him anew,
whenever they did the same.
This is the night of love.

*(pause)*

Come, ye sinners.
Come, ye thirsty.
Come, ye weary.
Come to the night of love.

Let us pray:

**Most merciful God,**
**we your Church confess**
**that often our spirit has not been that of Christ.**
**Where we have failed to love one another as he loves us,**
**where we have pledged loyalty to him with our lips**
**and then betrayed, deserted, or denied him,**
**forgive us, we pray;**
**and by your Spirit make us faithful in every time of trial;**
**through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ.
But Christ suffered and died for us,
was raised from the dead and ascended on high for us,
and continues to intercede for us.
Believe the good news:
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

**In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!**
**Glory to God. Amen.**

John 13.

Comment:

We live in a time of novel instructions and new commandments. Physical social distancing, closure of public buildings and spaces, restrictions on travel, working from home where possible – all seem like new commandments for a new world. Thankfully they will prove to be of only temporary necessity, and what passes for normality will one day resume, but perhaps that transition will leave us seeking new commandments that last – ways of living that build up rather than tear down, that heal rather than hurt.[[2]](#endnote-2)

I these times of social distancing and isolation and quarantine we are to avoid physical contact with others outside of our household. Which means those who do touch others are taking a risk. A risk of love and a risk of care. 8pm on Thursday nights is becoming a time when the nation acknowledges those who are running the risk of care or being physically rpe4sent to others when the rest of us are keeping our distance. Most attention has gone to those in the NHS: Doctors, nurses, people I the emergency services, but we should also include those who are carers, those working in care homes , those going to make daily visits to people to attend to their needs , those who are street volunteers locally shopping for others and picking up prescriptions and other tasks – being the arms and legs of those not prepared to risk going out. Simple task of washing others is a sacred task at this moment in time.

This crisis has made us question who are the key workers in society? Who are most essential? We have found its often the underpaid ones – the humble care assistants the ones who wash and take care of the needs of others who we are valuing the most at this time.

But these are abnormal times. When the reckoning comes, and things are hopefully back to normal will society still place that value on them then?

Our society is very competitive and people like hierarchy and like to feel more impotent than others. Jesus found his disciples competing with each other who was the most favoured disciple, who would get the top job, the best seats when Jesus came into his kingdom. So, this very symbolic parable and the catch line: no servant is greater than his or her master. In other words, don’t get full of your own self importance but always be prepared to serve one another instead of thinking the whole aim of life is to get people to serve you.

Other aspect of the washing parable is when peter says if you are going to wash me Lord then wash my hands and feet. Jesus says those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet their whole body is clean.

Some take this as a reference to baptism – the symbolism of being washed clean in Christ before God – we are right before God because of what Jesus has done for us. But we are human and we still sin – we still need to ask for daily forgiveness and put our relationship with God in order – a bit like washing our feet.

So symbolic for cleansing by Jesus.

So, invite you to wash your hands in the bowl –

Remember carers and caring by serving one another

And also cleansing – we are troubled by wrong attitudes, wrong motives, pollution of sin the discolouring of out true humanity, ask for God’s forgiveness

Wash hands

This is the night of love.
Jesus washed his disciples' feet,
reversing roles of master and student
servant and host,
and told them to do the same
to show the world God's love
and theirs.

On this night, we wash each other's feet,
obeying Christ's command to love one another
as he has loved us.

Come.
Let Christ love you here,
and share that love with another.

Wash hands:

 ***play From heaven you came***

Matthew 26.20-30

Kat Brealey writes in the IBRA notes the other day:

Jesus is celebrating Passover with his chosen friends when things take a darker turn when he predicts that one of them is going to betray him. They clearly want to deny it, yet their hesitant tone suggests they sense Jesus knows what is going to happen.

At this point there is an important lesson we can learn from the disciples. Though we often ridicule them, when Jesus reveals that one of those at the table will betray him, they immediately question themselves rather than accuse one another. Perhaps they were jumping to clear their name, but it’s striking that each disciple was more focused on their own place at Jesus table, than on whether others belonged there.

While most of the disciples call Jesus Lord, Judas opts for Rabbi. A tiny detail but it can be revealing that Judas didn’t have that respect for Jesus – the one he would betray. The disciples are speaking directly to Jesus as opposed to discussing who might be at fault.

In the context of church and society. We have been so divided over so many issues. The opportunity to publicly hold someone to account can be hard to resist. Equally self-examination is not often our first response to an accusation, wherever it comes from. This time of crisis has been a call for us to stick together, to overcome divisions, to take personal responsibility before accusing others. Long may that continue.

Jesus shares this meal with those who will betray him, namely Judas, deny him, as in the case of Peter, or desert him, as do all the other disciples. Yet he loves him still and shares a meal with them. Sharing meals, then as now was always to say I am alongside you: we are in communion. This meal is offered to all, saints and sinners, rich and poor, privileged and underprivileged – it brings us all together in the grace of Jesus Christ. Though we are isolated in our own homes and unable to be physically together, through the wonders of technology we can have virtual communion.

We remember Jesus – remember his love and forgiveness, his inclusion for all, his welcome and embrace, his promise to be with us always to the end of the age – whatever we will go through.

We ‘re-member’ by putting back the members of the body again’ through sharing in this act.

Pastor: This is the night of love.
And this is the table of love.
At this table, Christ, who loves us, is with us.
**He is with us, and we are his. We belong to God.** And so we pray:
**We are yours, all yours, blessed Triune God,
all our lives, all our thanks, all our praise,
all our fears, all our grumbling, all our hesitations,
all our loves, all our joys, all our passions,
we give them all to you, with bodies, and minds and voices.
Yours, all yours!**

You preached good news that God's kingdom has drawn near
and gathered disciples, then and now, to learn and show the world
what life in God's reign means:
healing for the sick.
new life for the dead,
cleansing for the lepers,
sight for the blinded,
food for the hungry,
freedom for the possessed,

love poured out for all.

**Worthy the night you took a towel and basin,
washed your disciples' feet,
and taught them to do likewise**.

Worthy too, the same night we betrayed you,
when you took the bread, blessed it and broke it,
and gave it to your disciples.

Worthy when you told them,
"This is my body broken for you. Remember me."

**We remember.**

Worthy when you took the cup,
praised God and shared it,
and worthy when you said,
"This is my blood of the new covenant for you. Remember me."

**We remember.**

We remember, and we praise you with our lives
and these gifts of bread and wine,
proclaiming with one voice the mystery of faith:
**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Come upon us, Holy Spirit.

Come upon these gifts.

Make them be for us Christ's body, Christ's blood.

**Make us one body in Christ**

One in heart, one in mind, one in you, Holy Spirit,

***Breaking of Bread and sharing of the cup***

After the meal Jesus prayed. Covers three chapters in John’s gospel. But light a candle and pray with me now.

**From heaven you came helpless babe**
Enter'd our world Your Glory veil'd
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live

This is our God, the Servant King -
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load He chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
Yet "Not my will but Yours", He said

Come see His hand and His feet -
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered

So, let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For Christ we're serving

1. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/maundy-thursday-in-an-alternativeemergent-mode> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. An old friend John Goddard wrote this reflection in the Baptist Times: <https://baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/572863/Maundy_Thursday_foot.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1jva9GmKi74zLr70nTp9__867tDYQtzfT7mG6OLWmZnAf5vBfU0BGw3qA> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)