**MAUNDY THURSDAY 2021**

The **Thursday** before Easter is known as either **Maundy Thursday**, or Holy **Thursday**. **Maundy** is derived from the Latin word for "command,” or mandate and refers to Jesus' commandment to the disciples to "Love one another as I have loved **you**."

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you. *John 13.34*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all **a**

**and also with you.**

**The Psalms:**

The psalms are the prayer book of the Bible and Jesus used and quoted them regularly. The book of psalms are full of laments and anguish, Jesus would quote Psalm 22 on the cross: My God My God why have you forsaken me’ and full of affirmations and praise: On Palm Sunday the crowds recited Psalm 118 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

We start our worship with the most famous psalm of all, Psalm 23

**HYMN The Lord’s my Shepherd I’ll not want**

**Prayers of Approach and Confession**

Lord thankyou that you are like a shepherd to us: keeping watch over us, protecting us and providing for us. As we come to remember that first Easter weekend, we remind ourselves of your love for us: how you faced evil and death, how you walked through that dark valley to lead us into greener pastures and prepare a table for us. As we reflect on the cup of salvation and the cup of wrath that you drank strengthen us in faith and commitment to your ways and purposes. Forgive our failings and weaknesses. Restore us once again because of your goodness and love and may we know we dwell in your house forever.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Today is 1st April: April Fools Day. Wonder if you had any pranks played on you?

Debbie – Mr Hawk rang – ring back - National Bird of Prey Centre

***Anyone else?***

There are some curious tales befitting the start of April in the newspapers today. , with an "exclusive" picture of Prince Harry and Meghan in [the Sun](https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/14516574/archbishop-harry-and-meghan-secret-wedding/) apparently saying their vows in front of the Archbishop of Canterbury - dressed as Elvis.

The [Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/uk) puts forward a plan for a second Suez canal, in a report written by "Ivor Shovel".

“It’s an exciting idea,” said Mo Sez, a regional expert in water division management, whose staff are managing a feasibility study of the area.

And [the i](https://inews.co.uk/) suggests visitors planning to travel to Cornwall this summer will face compulsory Cornish language tests in booths on the Tamar Bridge and the A30.

I did an assembly for Rednock Secondary School which may have been shown in tutorial groups yesterday and today. I said:

Thursday, April 1st is also known as Maundy Thursday for Christians. It is the start of the Easter weekend when Christians remember the death and resurrection of Jesus. From the earliest days of the church the cross of Jesus was seen as foolish. Why would you follow someone who got himself killed? Was he not a loser? Most Hollywood heroes suffer a bit and lose some battles before sorting out the bad guys and winning the war. But Jesus? He ends up humiliated and dying on a cross abandoned by almost all of his followers.

Days earlier Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey cheered on by the crowds who welcomed him as a king. Yet a king with a difference., No pomp and show of force, but humility.

He washes his disciple’s feet on Maundy Thursday to show a different way of being a leader – a leader who is a servant – who serves the needs of others, doesn’t try and lord it over others and enjoy the status. Some would say that’s a foolish way of being a leader. And the whole point of life is to get to the top, set your sights high and have others serve you and your needs. Denise Coates was revealed as the highest paid executive in Britain today – earned 500 million pounds last year. Startling, even more that it all came through gambling – reveals the soul of our nation. It’s hard to imagine someone you look up to willingly wanting to wash your feet. Maybe those first disciples thought it was like some kind of April Fools and perhaps only later realised the wisdom and the love in it.

Jesus preached that we should not just love our immediate friends and family but even our enemies. Again, some would say that’s a dangerous and foolish thing.

Jesus overturned the money changers tables and threatened the power and comfort of those in authority. He said you must worship God not money, but most of our lives centre around money and power – and April is a big month for your money - so was he foolish? A lot of people don’t believe in God anyway, so maybe there’s only money left to worship? Does that feel like wisdom?

Jesus forgave those who crucified him. Imagine forgiving those who are hurting you – never mind those who are killing you.

Then of course the crucifixion wasn’t the end of the matter. The Easter story ends with the claim of Christians that Jesus rose from the dead, that death is defeated and not the last word. Again, many would say that’s nonsense and flies in the face of science and observable fact. When you are dead, you are dead.

Foolish or not?

A good education will make you question and help you to decide what is wise or what is foolish. WE all have to decide for ourselves.

Is Easter a load of foolish nonsense or is there something in it? Or should we just concentrate on chocolate eggs and bunnies?

**Whose fool are you?**

**I’m glad you are joining me in this night of fools.**

This was the evening that Jesus washed his disciple’s feet and told them to go and do likewise: that no servant is greater than their master and if he, our Lord and master has washed his disciple’s feet we should also wash each other’s feet. In other words, humility is key to being a follower of Jesus and look to the needs of others as well as your own.

**God of towels and jugs and dirty feet
you revealed your glory
in the apparent foolishness of service.**

**God of towels and jugs and dirty feet
I reveal my foolishness
in my all too obvious thirst for glory.**

**God of towels and jugs and dirty feet
wash my feet, wash my hands, wash my heart
then send me out with fool’s towel
to wipe your glory into our Covid-stained world.

Amen.**

**By the Revd Phil Nevard, a URC Minister in Devon**

**Symbolically take a damp flannel and wipe the hands of those in your household as we sing our next song and then come to share in the meal that Jesu commissioned us to do in remembrance of him.**

**HYMN FROM HEAVEN YOU CAME**

**Sharing of Peace**

Washing of the feet in John’s account of that last evening Jesus had with his disciples. In John chapter 13-17 you get Jesus talking to his disciples in what is in effect his last will and testament. He washes their feet and tells them to serve one another. He tells them he is going ahead of them to prepare a place for them Ch. 14. He promises them the comforter, the Holy spirit. He tells them to remain in him like a vine and branches in ch 15. He commands them to love another. He promises the Spirit will guide them. He prays they may be united, be one. He prays for our protection against the trials and temptations that will come on us. He offers us a peace, a peace that the world cannot give.

As we come and celebrate the meal he left us, I wonder if we could offer that peace to each other:

**Peace of the Lord be with you**: share one by one.

**The Mystery of the Passover Cup**

**The story of that Maundy Thursday evening is also the story of two cups. Cup at the Last Supper and the Cup in the Garden of Gethsemane which Jesus prays that God would take away from him**

**The cup of blessing and the cup of suffering.**

**What does the Jewish Bible say about a Passover cup?[[1]](#endnote-1)**

The Passover cup is one of the central symbols of the Jewish Passover known as the Feast of Redemption. Yet the original Passover story makes no mention whatsoever of a cup. In fact, the only biblical mention of a cup in connection with Passover is in the New Testament. When Jesus celebrated this feast with His disciples, He raised a cup at least twice during the meal to make important statements about Himself (Luke 22:17, 20). What is the significance of the cup Jesus uses during His Passover observance?

**Cup Symbolism in the Jewish Bible**

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures the cup is often used as a symbol of God's judgment. For example, the cup of fury, the cup of judgment, the cup of trembling and the cup of horror and desolation appear throughout the Old Testament. Yet we also find the Psalmist crying out, "I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalm 116:13). So, the symbol of the cup carries with it pictures of both wrath and redemption, of judgment and blessing.

None of these references mentions the Passover. Yet, the themes of judgment and salvation are woven together beautifully in the Passover story. God poured out His judgment on the Egyptians but spared the Israelites who obeyed Him by placing the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their homes. Each year Jewish families retell these events through [**the *seder*,**](https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/newsletter/newsletter-apr-1979/the-seder/) the ceremonial meal that commemorates Passover.

**Not One Cup but Four**

Yet how the cup became a Passover symbol remains a mystery. We do know that by the time Jesus observed the Passover, drinking a cup during the meal was an official part of the observance. In fact, an ancient rabbinic source, the Mishnah, instructs those celebrating to drink from the cup four times during the Passover seder (Pesahim 10:1). That tradition remains to this day.

Each time the cup is filled, it has a different name. Opinions vary as to what certain cups actually symbolize. Most agree that the first cup is the *Kiddush*, which means sanctification. With this cup, we begin the Passover seder. The second cup is called the cup of plagues. The third cup is referred to as either the cup of redemption or the cup of blessing. The fourth cup is often called *hallel* which means praise, though some traditions call it the cup of acceptance while still others use it as the cup of Elijah.

Jewish tradition says little else about the cups—though they’re told they should be filled with red wine to remind us of the blood of the Passover lamb.

**Jesus and the Third Passover Cup**

The New Testament names one of the cups—the cup taken after supper, which is traditionally the third cup. Jesus calls this cup "the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). [**The Apostle Paul**](https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/issues/issues-v03-n04/paul-apostle-or-apostate/) calls it, "the cup of blessing which we bless," as well as "the cup of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 10:16,21).

Both Jesus and Paul draw on something from Jewish tradition to provide insights not previously understood. By calling the cup "the new covenant in my blood," Jesus makes a direct reference to the promise of Jeremiah 31. God had declared that He would make a new covenant because the previous covenant had become "broken" (Jeremiah 31:32). To violate a covenant agreement with God would surely incur His wrath and judgment—a terrible cup! But instead, God promised a new covenant of grace and salvation.

Jesus declared that this new covenant would be poured from the cup of salvation in His blood. The cup of redemption stood for more than the Hebrews' escape from Egypt; it stood for the plan and purpose of God for all the ages.

We come to celebrate that meal now

***Think of the cup of blessing***

What blessings do you want to give thanks for. What can you thank God for: For faith, for Jesus, for the church, for your own life?

***Share now***.

Pray for Holy Spirit to come and bless these gifts may they be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed

took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said:

‘This is my body which is broken for you.

Do this is 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.]

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen**. **Christ will come again.**

**Dying, you destroyed our death.**

**Rising, you restored our life.**

**Lord Jesus, come in glory.**

Come, Creator God: renew the face of the earth.

come, eternal Saviour: remake us in your likeness;

come, Holy Spirit, transform these gifts:

that Christ may be known to us in the breaking of the bread

and that we may be strengthened to serve him in the world.

May we on earth be one with all Christ’s people,

and, when all things are complete, be raised up to be with him,

[with .... *the saints; those who have died]*

and with all your faithful servants in the heavenly places,

the homeland which we seek by faith,

and where he reigns in glory,

with you, Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever.

**Amen**

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us.

Therefore let us keep the feast. I Corinthians 5:7

The bread which we break is the communion of the

body of Christ.

***Sing This is the body of Christ twice as we share in the bread***.

The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion

of the blood of Christ.

***Sing This is the body of Christ as we share in the cup***

**Gracious God,**

**may the love which bids us welcome at this table**

**gather all your children into one,**

**in your eternal presence,**

**whole and free at last.**

**After supper they sang a hymn and then went out to the Garden of Gethsemane.**

**So, we too song a hymn: that has pathos and feeling My Song is love unknown.**

**HYMN MY SONG IS LOVE**

**The Agony of Judgment and the Promise of Blessing**

Later that evening in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus cried out to the Lord in anguished prayer, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). In His humanity, Jesus could wish that this cup of judgment—the one that everyone *except* Him deserved for breaking of God's covenant—would pass over Him. Yet, as the obedient Son of God, Jesus knew that the cup of blessing could only be poured out for the salvation of many if He would first drink the cup of God's judgment on all humanity.

Despite the agony of separation from the Father, Jesus was willing to drink this cup, to bear this judgment, to suffer this horror and death that we might be free and forgiven. No wonder the Apostle Paul calls this "the cup of blessing which we bless." What greater blessing can there be than that which Messiah purchased for us in His death, burial and resurrection? The assurance of forgiveness, the vindication of his way of love, the promise that death is not the end.

In calling this the cup of blessing as it was known in the Jewish Passover, the Apostle Paul points out the powerful connection between Passover and Holy Communion. The roots of this sacrament are sunk deep in the eternal plan of God, which is unfolded through the pages of Scripture, as well as in the traditions of God's chosen people, the Jews.

This cup embodies the problem of judgment – the sin and suffering, evil and death in the world as well as the promise of redemption, God trying to make good come out of it all and bringing hope.

Let us pause and pray. Think of the cup of suffering. The cup of pain. The cup of judgement. The cup of death.

Offer prayers for the suffering of the world, those places were injustice and lack of freedom and liberation are. Those in pain, near death, grieving. Pray for God’s hope.

Prayer:

Jesus you went to the cross to suffer and die. You suffered our pain and died our death. You faced the evil and sin in the world and overcame through love and mercy. You reveal to us the blessing of God, that we live under grace. We give you thanks for this Easter hope. May it shape our lives and bless our futures.

**HYMN: There is a green hill far away.**

We follow Jesus to the cross trusting that God will turn the cup of wrath into the cup of blessing.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and ever more.

Amen.

1. https://jewsforjesus.org/newsletter-mar-2002/the-mystery-of-the-passover-cup [↑](#endnote-ref-1)