COVENANT COMMUNITY ONLINE WORSHIP

Maundy Thursday

**THURSDAY, 09 APRIL 2020, 8PM**

**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.

Welcome to this Maundy Thursday service. Maundy comes from the Latin word for ‘commandment,’ the same root word for mandate or mandatory. It refers to Jesus' commandment to the disciples in John 13 to ‘Love one another as I have loved you.’

**Hymn: Abide with me, fast falls the eventide**

The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away
Change and decay in all around I see
O Thou who changest not, abide with me

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?

I triumph still, if Thou abide with me

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me

*Henry Francis Lyle (1793–1847)*

**Minister:** 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.**

*Silence*

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.**

**Minister:** God our Father, in Jesus Christ you have invited us

to sup with you this night. 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 forever. **Amen.**

**Exodus 12.1-4 & 11-14**

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it.

This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance

A reading from the Gospels, according to John and Luke.

Hear the Gospel of Christ.

**Glory to Christ our Saviour.**

**John 13.1–17, 31b–35**

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.

Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**Luke 22.39–48**

Jesus came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.” Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.” [[ Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]] When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?

This is the Gospel of Christ,

**Praise to Christ our Lord.**

**Hymn: Before the Throne of God Above**

I have a strong, a perfect plea:
A great High Priest, whose name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on his hands,
My name is written on his heart;
I know that while in heaven he stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look, and see him there
Who made an end of all my sin.

Because the sinless Saviour died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold him there, the risen Lamb
My perfect, spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of glory and of grace!

One in himself, I cannot die
My soul is purchased by his blood
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ, my Saviour and my God
With Christ, my Saviour and my God

*Charitie Lees Smith (1841–1923)*

**The Sermon**

Not my will but yours be done is the climax of Jesus’ prayers on the night in which he was betrayed. It was a busy night for Jesus. A Passover meal with his friends, the last he would share with them before his betrayal, arrest and execution. The washing of their feet and in so doing he powerfully demonstrated of the kind of people, servant leaders that they were to be. He reminds them that love is to be their hallmark, the USP, the unique selling point for Christians is to be their love. By this all will know you are my disciples, by your love.

And then the scene shifts. Judas departs, clearly in order to betray Jesus. What were his motives? Was it money? John thinks so. He perceives Judas as one who loved money and used to steal from their common purse. Others wonder whether Judas was not simply disillusioned. He might have hoped that Jesus would be a different kind of messiah, one with political and military power that could overthrow the might of Rome. Instead Jesus was a spiritual leader offering a message of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Perhaps in his disillusionment he thought Jesus was clearly not the real deal, so as Jesus had failed to live up to his ideals he would hand him over.

Speaking of which, it is not insignificant that the night on which Jesus was betrayed, or handed over, was also the night of the Passover. The night on which Jewish people commemorated the night of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt, by the offering of a lamb to God. On that very night the Lamb of God was handed over by Judas to the authorities. The resonances point to Jesus as the Passover Lamb of God for us all.

Judas’ departure is the cue for Jesus’ own departure. He went to the Mount of Olives as was his custom to pray. However, his prayer is an unexpected one. Lord, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. I don’t want to do this God. Can’t you find some other way?

The ministry of Jesus began with his temptation. The season of Lent which concludes this week is modelled on the 40 days for which Jesus fasted during which he was tempted by the devil. Jesus’ temptations didn’t simply disappear. Here at the last moment we see him wrestling with temptation again. And the temptation here is pretty much the same as the temptations there and indeed our temptations everywhere: I don’t really want to do or to be what you are asking of me God. Is there another way?

I find myself in that situation repeatedly. If you pay attention you might find that you also find yourself in that situation, perhaps daily. The choices we make, whether to be kind, truthful, patient, loving, forgiving, gentle, faithful, self-controlled, joyful, peaceful, or good. When we decide whether to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. Sometimes we ask, is there another way? Often, we don’t even bother ask. We simply take other way. One that’s easier, or that feels more in tune with our desires.

Jesus demonstrates the appropriate response to his prayer. Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done. That’s a fabulous response but it’s not the end of the matter, for he is still clearly wrestling with the issue. He continues to pray, and angels minister to him, but despite this he prays so hard that he sweat drops of blood. This is a man who is desperate not to do this but also desperate to do the Father’s will.

In Mark’s account we are told that he prays in this way three times, the only time that we hear of Jesus praying repeatedly for the same thing. That’s reassuring to me. Sometimes we can give the impression that if you are a person of faith then you pray for it once and then you simply trust in God to supply your needs. Sometimes that is absolutely appropriate. And sometimes when we are struggling we have to keep praying as though our hearts will burst because we are at a crossroads, we have some clarity about what we ought to do next but to be absolutely honest we don’t want to do it. It looks too painful, it’s too unknown; it’s too dark, it asks more of us than we think we can bear.

I’ve talked a lot about Covid-19, and it is the big thing in our lives. But before covid-19 we each had challenges in our lives, challenges that we didn’t know how to face. When this pandemic passes, and it will one day pass, all those challenges are still waiting for us. So, we’ve got some work to do in preparation for that day.

Jesus’ response is the one I’d like to be able to give God. And truth be told sometimes that is the response I offer to God, but I still need some serious praying in order for it to move beyond lip service into reality. The reason that Jesus can face the cross on Good Friday is because he did some business with God and faced his fears and temptations on Mandy Thursday, on a night like this.

I wonder what might God be inviting us to face up to in our own lives and hearts tonight?

**Prayers of Intercession**

Let us pray.

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 another’s feet.

We commit ourselves to follow

his example of love and service

Lord hear us.

**Lord humble us.**

On this night, Jesus prayed for his disciples to be one. We pray for the unity of your Church.

Lord hear us.

**Lord unite us.**

On this night, Jesus prayed for those who were to believe. We pray for the mission of your Church.

Lord hear us.

**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.

Lord hear us.

**Lord fill us with your love.**

On this night, Jesus 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 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.

Lord hear us.

**Lord renew our hope and trust in you.**

We say together the prayer Jesus gave us in its modern form:

**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 forever. Amen.**

God is light, in whom there is no darkness at all.

**Jesus Christ is the light of the world.**

And this is the judgement, that the light

has come into the world

**and we loved darkness rather than light.**

May Jesus Christ, who for our sake, became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you this night and forever. **Amen.**

Go in peace.

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