

## **Maundy Thursday**

Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13: 1-17, 31b-35  
March 28, 2024

Here we are in the midst of Holy Week.  
The span from Palm Sunday through to Easter morning  
holds the full spectrum of human experience.

Unlike Christmas, where the predominant emotion  
is supposed to be joy and wonder, and the happy exchange of gifts,  
this week can meet us wherever we are in our own lives...  
for in it we find anxiety, violence, hopelessness, grief, death  
and celebration of new life emerging from darkness.  
All of us can find ourselves somewhere in this narrative.

On this night, Jesus shares acts of love with his disciples,  
and models a new vision of power that comes forth  
from giving ourselves into sacrificial and sacramental love.  
Tonight's psalm invites us to realize the ways  
in which we have experienced God's grace and deliverance –  
and to look for the new ways in which God will amaze us.

The Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt  
is a story of deliverance, especially the Passover.  
It is a living history of the Jewish people, and for all people.  
When the enslaved Africans in America learned this story,  
they adopted it as their own and it became their roadmap toward freedom.

The children of Israel are delivered.  
But we remain stuck in old models of violence and exclusion  
if we don't think about the first born Egyptian children,  
whom the angel of death did not pass over.  
What of their grief stricken parents?  
How many times have we read the text  
and never considered their feelings and their inner lives?

Bruce Epperly, a Lutheran pastor and teacher says,  
“A God who chooses sides is hardly worthy of worship.  
The moral arc of history must take into consideration  
the humanity of oppressors.”

We move into this space, as we read the account of the last supper in 1st Corinthians and John's gospel.

What we do together here is holy ground, and God is here.  
God's presence is all around us –  
as we say the prayers and sing the hymns;  
as we break bread and share the meal;  
as we take towels and pour water and tend to one another.

Visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.

A true sign of sacramental presence is  
That we experience it all at once  
in the past, the future, and the immediate present moment;  
when time itself gathers 'round.

On this holy night  
we remember God's grace and deliverance in times past.  
we anticipate God's ongoing transformation as we look toward our future.  
We are present to one another in this place, at these tables.

On this night, Jesus gives us a new commandment.  
And, he models his new commandment  
as he leaves his place as host and head of the table  
in order to serve his disciples.  
He washes their feet –  
a regular ritual of middle eastern hospitality,  
that the servants usually took care of.

He then provides them with the Passover meal.  
He gives his very self to them in the bread and in the wine.

Then, he gives his mandate.  
It is a commandment that makes no room for exclusion or violence.  
It is a commandment in which power is not enforced by hierarchy,  
But, hierarchy serves relational power only to bring order.

Love one another in the same way that I have loved you.

How are we to become servant to those who wait in darkness for deliverance,  
we who know God's grace and deliverance and the happy morning of new light?

## At Foot/Hand Washing

Friends,

Our feet can be dusty and dry and calloused as they carry us.

Our hands are constantly moving, preparing, holding, expressing.

So, we offer the washing of both tonight.

Peter exclaimed, "Not only my feet, but my hands and my head."

In other words, "Cleanse all of me!"

If you would like to participate, please make your way to either station one at a time- rather than lining up.

If you want to have your feet washed,

take off your shoes and socks before you come to the station. I

and take a seat in the chair.

If you want your hands washed, stand in front of the wash stand.

When your feet or hands have been washed,

you can wash the feet or hands of the next person coming up.

If you are not able to bend down to wash feet, let Gail or I step in for you.