



Seeking: Will You Wash My Feet?

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **purple cloth** or scarf to signify that we are in a time of preparation.*

You might also like to have a bowl of water and a towel, and some bread and grape juice.

Light your candle and take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.



Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern.

We pay our respect to their elders, past, present and emerging.

We recognise that this land was never ceded and we commit ourselves to working for justice and a renewed life together in this beautiful place we all call home.

Introduction

Tonight we remember the time when Jesus gathered his disciples - women and men, young and old.

It is Passover - a special time for the Jewish people.

Jesus had given instructions for the meal to be prepared and so they gathered.

Tonight, we will share a simple meal together - it is not Passover for us, that religious festival belongs to others - tonight we focus on two actions of Jesus that have been passed down to us - washing the feet of his disciples and sharing in bread and wine.

Call To Worship / Prayer

There is something special about this moment, this night,
there is expectation and familiarity with this story,
and yet there is a wildness to it,
a hope that you will break into our expectations and our familiarity,
just as your love shatters boundaries and assumptions.

Here we pause between what we were and who we will become
to feed our bodies and awaken our spirits.

Here beside the basin,
we will remember what love can do.

Here at the table,
we will confess that there is brokenness and healing that this world needs.

We come to find healing together.

Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Maundy Thursday 2023, p.93

Let us pray,
Loving God,
we gather tonight conscious and deeply grateful for your love for us.
As we listen and reflect,
as our bodies are nourished, so may our hearts and souls be also.
As your Spirit moves amongst us, may we be inspired and strengthened once more to live
lives that reflect your love into all the world - this day and always. Amen.

Reading: John 13:1-11

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. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then 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. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' ⁷Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' ⁸Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' ⁹Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' ¹⁰Jesus 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.' ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

Invitation

"Foot washing is uncomfortable for many people, just as Peter was uncomfortable with Jesus washing his feet. We invite you to lean into this discomfort around vulnerability."

You might like to wash your hands in the bowl and consider the story we have just heard.

You might like to join with us as we sing...

Sing - Kneels At The Feet of His Friends (TIS 640)

Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washes their feet:
master who acts as a slave to them.

*Yesu, Yesu,
fill us with your love,
show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.*

Neighbours are wealthy and poor,
varied in colour and race,
neighbours are nearby and far away.
Yesu, Yesu...

These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love;
all these are neighbours to us and you.
Yesu, Yesu...

Loving puts us on our knees,
silently washing their feet,
this is the way we should live with you.
Yesu, Yesu...

*Words: Tom Colvin
Music: Ghana folk song
© 1969 Hope Publishing Co*

Reading: John 13:12-17 - Helen C

¹² 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? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Prayer of Confession

God of extravagant love,
you bore the cost of misguided wisdom
that puts success and selfish ambition above concern for others.

You bore the cost
of our systems of government and big business,
that promise wealth and opportunity,
but which forget the principles of equality.

You bore the cost of the wars we engage in,
and acts of violence perpetrated on others.

You bore the cost of our inadequate attention to the detail of creation,
and our failure to show responsible stewardship.

You bore the cost of our human tendency to segregate based on race, gender, sexual
orientation and religion,
with the result we are responsible for a divided world -
where many suffer mistreatment and sometimes abuse.

Merciful God,
you bore the cost of all of this.
You saw it in history,
you observed it in all present times,
and you even predicted it within humanity's own future.

And so, you put up with the terrible pain of coming to the human story in Jesus,
and enduring the emotion of loss.
Not to substitute Yourself for us -
but to reveal the unconditional love of your nature;
a love that does not count the cost,
but is prepared to do anything for the welfare of the human family you love.
Let us be led this night,
to a true understanding of our place in your heart,
and let the example of service and extravagant love
in this ancient story,
inspire us to such a love for you and the world around us,
that is as fully generous as it was then.
Amen.

Adapted from Spill the Beans, Issue 46, resources for Maundy Thursday, p.60

Sharing

Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 - Geoff

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁵In 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.' ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Communion

Introduction

Jesus said:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

The peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

You might like to share a sign of the peace with one another.

Again, some may not want to shake hands, please be aware of that - a nod and a spoken greeting is fine. And don't forget there is hand sanitiser on your tables.

Let us pray...

We are blessed,
for you, Lord of Creation,
give us a wonderful world
of which we are a part
and countless opportunities to explore.

We are blessed,
for you, Jesus, cared for, healed,
and served humanity
with humbleness and costly devotion.

We are blessed,
for you, Holy Spirit, dwell in creation and in life,
and by your energy implant Wisdom in us,
allowing us to know God and to know God's will.

Now, may this sharing, this sacrament, become a blessing to us in this holy season,
that we may know strength and comfort in the presence of God,
and know the nourishment of God's love for us.

Jesus, servant and friend,
with deep symbolism and meaning,
in your final moments with your disciples,
you presented an action of loving service.
In the memory of the images of that night,
let us come before you in this act of devotion,
ready to receive what you are prepared to offer.

In taking the bread,
you reminded those present, and remind us,
of the human connection that makes us
one body with you, our God,
and with each other.

In breaking bread,
you remind us how broken we are,
and how much we need to be put back together.
Yet, in its breaking, you also reveal how the separated grace, mercy, and love of God
is enough for all the world
when it is shared evenly from your hand to ours,
and from one human hand to another.

In taking wine,
you reminded those present, and remind us,
that we are the fruits of your vine and of your labour to make us special, gifted people.
In offering the cup,
you promise us the thirst-quenching sustenance
of the eternal love of God, Father and Mother of us all.
In partaking, and in its sharing,
you invite us to participate in extending the flow of
love and mercy throughout our faith communities,
and into our communities of work and residency.

This night, let us have the wisdom,
to tune in to the deepest parts of this emotional experience,
that we might be changed from the inside out, and be ready for what lies ahead. Amen

Invitation To The Table

On the night in which he was betrayed, and while they were eating,
Jesus took bread, [*take the bread*]
blessed it, broke it, [*break it and pass it around if there are others present*]
and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you".

And when the supper was over,
he took the cup, [*take the juice*]
gave thanks to God,
shared it with his disciples and said, "Drink from this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink of it,
in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these things,
we offer ourselves to this moment of divine presence.
Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Receive what God has to offer.
Share this holy meal and remember our Lord Jesus Christ.
By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other,
and one in ministry to all the world.

In Christ, through Christ and because of Christ. Amen.

Adapted from Spill the Beans, Issue 46, resources for Maundy Thursday, p.61

Eat and drink together.

Sing - Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You (TIS 650)

Brother, sister,
let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

We are pilgrims on a journey
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

Brother, sister,
let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

Words and Music: Richard Gillard

Video - Land of The Seeking (Sanctified Art)

This song accompanies us as we look towards the cross - it invites us to inhabit the Land of the Seeking... <https://vimeo.com/800216630>

Reflection

One of the things that fascinates me, is the different ways each of the gospels record and describe the events of Jesus' life.

Where each of the gospels record the death and resurrection of Jesus, they each do it in quite different ways. If you have never noticed the differences, perhaps one way you could spend time of reflection and prayer in the next couple of days is to read each of the gospel accounts - slowly, deliberately, looking for the similarities and the differences and thinking about why those similarities and differences are held.

The gospel attributed to John is the only gospel to include the description of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. It also includes a long record of what Jesus said to his disciples that night around the table (chapters 14-17) before it turns to his arrest, death and resurrection.

Peter doesn't feature in John's gospel in the same way he does in the other gospels. But here, he seems to be emerging - "Are you going to wash my feet, Jesus?"

I wonder about Peter's tone. Was it humble, like, "really, me too?" or almost accusing, "are you really going to wash my feet?" The gospel account doesn't really tell us...

Instead, it tells us Jesus reply - Peter, you will understand eventually.

"No never!", says Peter.

To which Jesus, to me, offers a gentle answer - Peter, are you with me or not? If so, just let me get on with it.

"Alright", says Peter, "so wash all of me!"

You can almost hear Jesus sigh, as he tells Peter that he doesn't need his whole body washed - Peter has missed the point - but he will get it... eventually.

Get what?

This is Love - love that serves one another,
love that does the most menial of tasks -
maybe for us it is not so much about washing people's feet,
but maybe it is about noticing the sinks in the toilet need a wipe down or the toilet paper or
hand towel needs replacing,
maybe it is sitting next to someone who is on their own,
maybe it is picking up rubbish or pulling out weeds in the garden,
maybe it is getting the vacuum out because there is something on the floor,
maybe it is being deliberate about learning a new skill like using the dishwasher or the
sound system or the photocopier in order to share the load
maybe it is about taking the time to phone or visit or check-in on someone
This is love - love that will do whatever needs doing to offer welcome, hospitality, care,
concern, that will embrace each soul, even the ones that are hard to care for.

And this is Love - love that shares a meal, that offers hospitality, that speaks deeply and
honestly together, that prays for and with, that hangs around when the going gets tough.
This is love - that seeks out community and communion, that actively engages with and
alongside one another.

Tonight and tomorrow, as we listen once more to the account of the final hours of Jesus'
life, we meet a God who will go with us to the utmost end of our humanity, a God who is
fully present with us in our deepest pain and grief, a God who loves us completely.
Will you allow this God to wash your feet?
Will you wash the feet of the people around you?
This is Love.

Sing - Holy Darkness (AOV2-24)

*You might want to listen to this song, that invites us to reflect on the darkness and how
God might be speaking to us...*

*Holy darkness, blessed night,
heaven's answer hidden from our sight.
As we await you, O God of silence,
we embrace your holy night.*

I have tried you in fires of affliction;
I have taught your soul to grieve.
In the barren soil of your loneliness
there I will plant my seed.
Holy darkness...

I have taught you the price of
compassion;
you have stood before the grave.
Though my love can seem like a raging
storm,
this is the love that saves.
Holy darkness...

Were you there when I raised up the
mountains?
Can you guide the morning star?
Does the hawk take flight when you give
command?
Why do you doubt my power?
Holy darkness...

In your deepest hour of darkness
I will give you wealth untold.
When the silence stills your spirit,
will my riches fill your soul.
Holy darkness...

As the watchman waits for morning,
and the bride awaits her groom,
so we wait to hear your footsteps
as we rest beneath your moon.
Holy darkness...

© 1988, 1993 Dan Schutte

Responding

Reading: John 13:31b-35 - Pam

³¹ ... Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little 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." ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Prayer for Others

God of eternal and abiding presence,
we thank you for those who have introduced us to your living personality,
and who have shown us your love in action;
for their wise words and example of how loving kindness can impact on others.

We thank you for those in our community
who, through their actions, put others before self, demonstrating the meaning of
generosity:
giving from richness for some
and out of their poverty for others.
Such extravagance in giving to others,
and to the causes of the world,
is a reminder of what you have given to us.

We pray for our world this night and for all who are in need.
We pray for people who are hungry tonight -
for people in Somalia and other parts of Africa ravaged by drought
for people in our own communities struggling to make ends meet and to put food on the
table for their children.
We pray for people who are frightened tonight -
for people in Ukraine and other parts of the world bombarded by violence and terror
for people in places where people rule using violence and oppression.
We pray for people who are ill tonight -
for people in hospital or recovering at home
for people struggling with their mental health
and we pray for the people who offer medical and pastoral care.

In preparation for the continuing journey of this week,
grant us now such a strong sense of your living presence that,
despite the ending we meet tomorrow,
we will know, even now,
that death is not the end,
and that you reign forever and ever. Amen.

Adapted from Spill the Beans, Issue 46, resources for Maundy Thursday, p.62

Sending

Sing - A New Commandment (TIS 699)

Just as Jesus and his disciples left the upper room singing a hymn, so we go singing as we carry the Christ light out into the world.

A new commandment, I give unto you
that you love one another as I have loved you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
By this will others know that you are my disciples
if you have love one for another;
by this will others know that you are my disciples
if you have love one for another.

Prayer

There is a tradition that no benediction or blessing is pronounced tonight as the journey from the upper room to Easter Day is considered one long service of worship. So we conclude with a prayer tonight and we gather again in the morning to remember Jesus' journey to the cross.

Let us pray...

God of might and mercy,
we give thanks for the sustaining power of Creation's gifts
and for Creation itself.
We give thanks for the freedom we find in your presence
and the nourishment we find in your spirit.
Help us to go from this table to find you at every table,
on every street corner,
in every city centre and in every possibility calling us
to offer and receive love. May it be so. Amen.

Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Maundy Thursday 2023, p.95

Liturgy adapted from material from:
Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Lent-Easter 2023
Spill The Beans, Resources for Lent-Easter 2023
A Sanctified Art: Seeking, www.sanctifiedart.org
Rev Kath Merrifield
6 April 2023