

MAUNDY THURSDAY AT HOME

Provided by Grace Lutheran Church ~ ELCA



Thursday, April 9, 2020

GATHERING

The section marked **One** is for clarification only. It does not have to be the same person – if there are several people participating, you may feel to take turns being the **One**.

As you gather together, light a candle so everyone knows this isn't just any family meal. Something special and holy is about to happen.

One: Many of us know that Jesus' last night with his friends was spent in a place called the Upper Room. That's where they gathered around a table for their meal. The disciples thought it was going to be a meal just like so many other meals they had shared with Jesus, but this one turned out to be unlike any meal they had ever known.

One: You may have seen pictures of the Last Supper where Jesus and the disciples are sitting in chairs, the way we do it. But actually, they reclined on cushions at a table on the floor. It was a "laid back" occasion.

One: There were two really important things that happened at this meal.

1) It was the first time Jesus took the bread and wine, blessed them, and said, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." Every time we celebrate communion, we're remembering this night when Jesus shared himself with his disciples around the table. He's promised that he continues to come to us, even today, in the bread and wine.

Christians celebrate Holy Communion when the community is together. The meal isn't just about the bread and wine; it's about receiving this gift from one another and with one another. During our love-distancing these days (a friend has renamed social-distancing love-distancing, and I really like that), we're fasting from Holy Communion, and look forward to the day when we'll all gather again to receive our living Lord who gives himself to us in this amazing way.

2) But before Jesus even got to the part where he gave his disciples Holy Communion for the first time, he did something to show them how much he loved them. He knelt before them and washed their feet. This was his way of showing them that they need to love and serve one another in humility, just like he was doing when he washed their feet. And he gave them a new commandment - that they love one another as he loved them. In fact, the word Maundy means commandment. It is why we call this day Maundy Thursday, or Commandment Thursday.

Preparation [In times of pandemic/epidemic]

One: We begin by washing, as we were washed in our baptism. We cleanse our hands as we were cleansed in the waters of new birth. We do this not because we are afraid, but because we were commanded to love: and to cleanse our hands, and gather in spirit, is how we love the vulnerable, whom Jesus loved. May we be instruments of love. May the sacrifices we make be for the good of our human family near and far.

Each person present then washes their hands thoroughly with soap and water, and takes their place at the table.

Before you begin your meal together, read John 13:3-17, 34-35. It is included at the end of this booklet.

Let us pray: **Tonight is a holy night. Tonight we join with Christians around the world as we remember the last night our Lord spent with his friends. We gather here, around this table, and with all those everywhere who remember tonight. Though we are dispersed, we are together, in spirit and truth. May we know that whenever we eat, you are here at the table with us, teaching us to love one another in the way you have first loved us. Amen**

Suggestion for conversation: Think about some of the special meals that you have shared with the people you love. What made them memorable? How is this like or different than Holy Communion? What do you miss about taking Holy Communion in this time when we are not receiving it?

After everyone is finished with the meal, pray the following prayer:

Holy and life-giving God, we thank you for the bounty of your Creation that has been laid before us here. Through it, we ask that you would bless us. We give thanks for all those who labored so that it might sustain us, and we ask that through you, it would give us the strength to be your good stewards; to care and tend to all you have made; and to care especially for our siblings, all the people of this world. Tonight, be with all your children, and in particular, we ask that you would be with the members of our community of faith, who we love and miss, those with whom we are unable to share this meal. We ask all these things in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

One: When we come together to worship in our church building on Maundy Thursday, we end our time together with the stripping of the altar. As we hear a Psalm sung or said, all the things we hold sacred are removed: candles, bible, altar book, communion ware, linens and paraments. When it is finished, the altar is completely bare. It reminds us of the bareness of life without the hope of Christ that we have through his resurrection.

To remember this tradition, we will read Psalm 22 together. Notice how this Psalm foreshadows the death of Jesus on the cross, and leads us into the sorrow of Good Friday. You can read it from your Bible, or it is included at the end of this booklet.

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Once the Psalm has been read, you can do a “stripping of the altar” in your own home, if you would like...

- Gather any faith related items you may have in your house -- icons, statues, religious art and symbols that can be easily removed, including the candle you used during dinner. Pack them away somewhere, in a storage bin or a bag. (You might also cover any large items with a cloth.)
- Remove all items from your dining table so it's completely empty and thoroughly wash it so it is both cleared and cleaned.

One: *Let us pray:*

All: **Holy One, draw near to your people this night, wait and watch with us; for our hearts our heavy. Send your holy angels to watch over the sick, and to guide the hands of those who tend to them. And we beseech you, comfort us as a Mother soothes her beloved children. May we watch, and wait, strengthened by your presence. Amen**

Idea for Easter morning: bring back and light the candle you used during the meal tonight for your Easter meal; unpack and uncover the religious items and decorate your dining room table with Easter joy so your family can awaken to a day of celebration!

God's blessings to all of you as you discover new ways of worshiping God through these days of distancing. Even when it is not two or three who are gathered, but just one, I can assure you that Jesus is in the midst of us!

Service adapted from Maundy Thursday worship by Pastor Nancy Kraft, Ascension Lutheran Church, Towson MD and The Rev. Josephine Robertson, All Saints Episcopal Church, Bellevue, WA.

The First Reading: John 13:3-17, 34-35

Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You don't understand what I'm doing now, but you will understand later."

"No!" Peter said. "You will never wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't have a place with me." Simon Peter said, "Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!" Jesus responded, "Those who have bathed need only to have their feet washed, because they are completely clean. You disciples are clean, but not every one of you." He knew who would betray him. That's why he said, "Not every one of you is clean."

After he washed the disciples' feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, "Do you know what I've done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you speak correctly, because I am. If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do. I assure you, servants aren't greater than their master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them. Since you know these things, you will be happy if you do them.

"I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

The Second Reading: Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people.

All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

“Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.

On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

They open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax;

It is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,

and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.

For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled;

I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me;

They divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.

But you, O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid!

Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog!

Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.

I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted;

he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;

and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.

For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;

before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.

Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord,

And proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.