

St. Andrew's Online Maundy Thursday

Prelude

"Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross"

Prayer of Invocation

Lord Jesus, tonight we walk with you through the valley of the shadow of death.

Let us find our life in you, O Lord.

You have made us and drawn us to yourself,

and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

You are the Christ; remember us in your kingdom.

We come to hear of your love for us;

You are the way to eternal life. Amen.

The Gathering Dark

³¹ Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, "Listen! We are going to Jerusalem where everything the prophets wrote about the Son of Man will come true. ³² He will be handed over to the Gentiles, who will make fun of him, insult him, and spit on him. ³³ They will whip him and kill him, but three days later he will rise to life." ³⁴ But the disciples did not understand any of these things; the meaning of the words was hidden from them, and they did not know what Jesus was talking about.

The time was near for the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover. ² The chief priests and the teachers of the Law were afraid of the people, and so they were trying to find a way of putting Jesus to death secretly. ³ Then Satan entered into Judas, called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples. ⁴ So Judas went off and spoke with the chief priests and the officers of the Temple guard about how he could betray Jesus to them. ⁵ They were

pleased and offered to pay him money. ⁶ Judas agreed to it and started looking for a good chance to hand Jesus over to them without the people knowing about it.

[“Bless the Lord, My Soul”](#)

Uncomfortable Love

It was now the day before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved those in the world who were his own, and he loved them to the very end.

² Jesus and his disciples were at supper. The Devil had already put into the heart of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, the thought of betraying Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had given him complete power; he knew that he had come from God and was going to God. ⁴ So he rose from the table, took off his outer garment, and tied a towel around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured some water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Are you going to wash my feet, Lord?”

⁷ Jesus answered him, “You do not understand now what I am doing, but you will understand later.”

¹² After Jesus had washed their feet, he put his outer garment back on and returned to his place at the table. “Do you understand what I have just done to you?” he asked. ¹³ “You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. ¹⁴ I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you. ¹⁶ I am telling you the truth: no slaves are greater than their master, and no messengers are greater than the one who sent them.

³⁴ And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

Reflection | Uncomfortable Love

The act of washing another person's feet is odd and unsettling to us. Feet...are feet; stuffed into shoes or sandals all day, blistered and callused, certainly not the most attractive part of the human body. Having someone wash our feet is uncomfortable, outside of a close relationship; having someone at church wash our feet – a minister or elder – is far outside of most people's comfort zone. The church I grew up in practised foot-washing as an act of worship and a sacrament; it's been coming back into fashion these last few years, but back thirty years ago...it was not much done. As a little girl, seeing our very dignified and proper minister and our elders, our leaders and teachers, kneel and wash the feet of the men and women of the church, from the most faithful workers and supporters to the newest, shakiest members; it seemed wrong, backwards somehow, and just too much.

Foot-washing is meant to be unsettling. But not because of modesty or because our last pedicure was a while ago. What foot-washing means should make us uncomfortable. Such a radical, an extreme example of servanthood ought to be so unnerving that we might find ourselves as uncomfortable as Peter was: "Are you going to wash my feet, Lord? No, you must never do that."

Jesus knew that God had given him complete power; Jesus knew that he had come from God and was soon going to go back to Him. What does Jesus choose to do with that power and certainty? Jesus, who in his adult life lived as one with no place to lay his head, he begins to pour himself out for us even more; he begins to empty himself out even further for others in this undeniably too-intimate, too-humble way. I mean, couldn't he have washed hands or faces? Those are much more socially-acceptable body parts, less grubby, less smelly, less ugly than most pairs of feet.

Christ's humility was and is beautiful; but it makes us more aware of how...not beautiful we are. The author Dorothy Sayers, drawing on Shakespeare, wrote that "Jesus had a daily beauty that makes us ugly." We are so full of ourselves, of writing of our own stories, of our own importance, our own plans and worries and preoccupations. We fill our lives with all kinds of things: people, hobbies, work, volunteering, ambition, travel, experiences, fine foods and entertainment...in startling contrast, Christ emptied himself: first in heaven, to come to us as Emmanuel; and then on earth, as our Crucified Saviour.

By washing his disciples' feet, by sharing his body and blood through the Lord's Supper, by dying on the Cross – that's Jesus, pouring himself out, giving his everything. That's Jesus, inviting us to take that gift of grace and love, to take him fully, his life emptied out into ours. This act of foot-washing, too intimate, too unsettling as it is, Jesus washing his disciples' feet,

in the last week of his life, it's like the turn of the tide. Yes, by the end of tonight, the powers of darkness will take over, for a time. But like the tide, the love and grace that Christ is inviting us into will rush in, like mighty rivers, as transformative as a flood, as unstoppable and inevitable as the sea. That is how we are loved by Jesus.

That is how we are commanded on this night to love one another: as Christ loves us. On our own, impossible; with Jesus' love, his too-intimate, too-humble, too-much love given to us, living in us, not impossible at all.

In just a few moments, our next song will begin to play. I invite you to let the music drown out your worries and concerns, and to let the words focus your attention on Jesus. Close your eyes, and breathe; reach out with your heart and mind to him tonight, and let his life pour out into yours.

["Lord, Hear my Prayer"](#)

Into the Night, Part I

They came to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³ He took Peter, James, and John with him. Distress and anguish came over him, ³⁴ and he said to them, "The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch."

³⁵ He went a little farther on, threw himself on the ground, and prayed that, if possible, he might not have to go through that time of suffering. ³⁶ “Father,” he prayed, “my Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet not what I want, but what you want.”

³⁷ Then he returned and found the three disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Weren't you able to stay awake for even one hour?” ³⁸ And he said to them, “Keep watch, and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

³⁹ He went away once more and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ Then he came back to the disciples and found them asleep; they could not keep their eyes open. And they did not know what to say to him.

[“What Wondrous Love is This”](#)

Into the Night, Part II

⁴¹ When Jesus came back the third time, he said to the disciples, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come! Look, the Son of Man is now being handed over to the power of sinners. ⁴² Get up, let us go. Look, here is the man who is betraying me!”

⁴⁷ Jesus was still speaking when a crowd arrived, led by Judas, one of the twelve disciples. He came up to Jesus to kiss him. ⁴⁸ But Jesus said, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you betray the Son of Man?”

⁴⁹ When the disciples who were with Jesus saw what was going to happen, they asked, “Shall we use our swords, Lord?” ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the High Priest's slave and cut off his right ear.

⁵¹ But Jesus said, “Enough of this!” He touched the man's ear and healed him.

⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests and the officers of the Temple guard and the elders who had come there to get him, “Did you have to come with swords and clubs, as though I were an outlaw? ⁵³ I was with you in the Temple every day, and you did not try to arrest me. But this is your hour to act, when the power of darkness rules.”

[“Jesus, Remember Me”](#)

Doxology | Philippians 2:8-11

And being found in human form, [Christ] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.