

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Thursday, March 28th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Why Maundy Thursday
Maundy Thursday
Matthew 26:26-29

Welcome

Call to Worship

Jesus said:

**I give you a new commandment,
that you love one another.
Just as I have loved you,
you also should love one another.**

On this day

**Christ the Lamb of God
gave himself into the hands of those who would slay him.**

On this day

Christ gathered with his disciples in the upper room.

On this day

**Christ took a towel and washed the disciples' feet,
giving us an example that we should do to others
as he has done to us.**

On this day

**Christ our God gave us this holy feast,
that we who eat this bread
and drink this cup
may here proclaim his holy sacrifice
and be partakers of his resurrection,
and at the last day may reign with him in heaven.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God, your love was embodied in Jesus Christ,
who washed disciples' feet on the night of his betrayal.
Wash us from the stain of sin,

so that, in hours of danger,
 we may not fail,
 but follow your Son through every trial,
 and praise him always as Lord and Christ,
 to whom be glory now and forever.

Amen.

Opening Hymn #224: “An Upper Room Did Our Lord Prepare”

An upper room did our Lord prepare
 for those he loved until the end:
 and his disciples still gather there
 to celebrate their risen friend.

A lasting gift Jesus gave his own:
 to share his bread, his loving cup.
 Whatever burdens may bow us down,
 he by his cross shall lift us up.

And after supper he washed their feet,
 for service, too, is sacrament.
 In Him our joy shall be made complete:
 sent out to serve, as he was sent.

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Eternal God,
 whose covenant with us is never broken,
 we confess that we fail to fulfill your will.
 Though you have bound yourself to us,
 we will not bind ourselves to you.
 In Jesus Christ you serve us freely,
 but we refuse your love
 and withhold ourselves from others.
 We do not love you fully
 or love one another as you command.
 In your mercy, forgive and cleanse us.
 Lead us once again to your table
 and unite us to Christ,
 who is the bread of life
 and the vine from which we grow in grace.**

Assurance of Pardon

The mercy of the Lord
 is from everlasting to everlasting.
 I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ,
 you are forgiven.
 May the God of mercy,
 who forgives you all your sins,
 strengthen you in all goodness,
 and by the power of the Holy Spirit
 keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

Scripture**Matthew 26-26-29**

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Music Ministry: "And We Remember" Choir**Sermon**

What is Maundy Thursday all about? Why do we gather together today for worship and praise? Isn't Maundy Thursday just for the Roman Catholics?

These are all questions that I get asked every year around this time. So, let's take some time today to discover where the idea of Holy Thursday comes from in the Scriptures and why so many congregations gather this day to praise and worship the One True Living God.

The History of Maundy Thursday begins in the Jewish Celebration of Passover, which is rooted in the event that occurred during their exodus from Egypt. Passover was celebrated on the 15th day of the first month of the Hebrew Calendar, and it was a celebration that Jesus maintained right up to this night, just a few days hours before he would be hung up upon the cross.

During the first centuries some Christians observed the celebration of the Passover meal in the same manner as the Hebrews, which meant the day of the week changed every year. Others found more meaning in celebrating the event in the same way in which it

appeared the year that Jesus was crucified and resurrected. To further complicate things, the ancient way of counting was inclusive, meaning the day you started counting was counted as day one, not day zero. And the Hebrew day started at sunset and not sunrise. So, when we try to figure out the three days and three nights that the Scripture speaks of the solution, naturally led those of the Christian Faith to typically celebrate the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday. Three days and three nights before the Resurrection on we know of on Sunday morning.

There was no division between the early church around this, the same way that some held worship services on the Jewish Sabbath, Saturday, and other worshiped on Sundays, the day of Resurrection. They turned to the teachings found in the book of Romans, which taught of respect for different ideas about allowable foods and days of worship as their reason to maintain unity.

The Jewish Tradition of Passover was a reminder of the passing over of death, in the final plague that God cast upon the Egyptians, the death of the firstborns of Egypt. It celebrated the Jewish nations deliverance by God. The meal was symbolic and the foods that were eaten were to remind the people of that time in Egypt and the power of God's deliverance.

The meal consisted of:

1. Lamb The word 'Pesach' (pasch, passover) applies to the Lamb of sacrifice as well as to the deliverance from Egypt and to the feast itself.

2. Unleavened bread (Matzoh) called "bread of affliction" because it recalls the unleavened bread prepared for the hasty flight by night from Egypt.

3. Bitter herbs (Moror) is a reminder of the bitterness of slavery and suffering in Egypt.

4. Green herbs to be dipped in salt water. Salt water represents tears of sorrow shed during the captivity of the Lord's people.

5. Haroseth (or 'haroses') - a mixture of chopped apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine represents the mortar used by Jews in building palaces and pyramids of Egypt during their slavery.

6. Wine is dipped from a common bowl.

There are four acts of drinking wine during the Seder feast – known as the 'Four Cups' – 'Thanksgiving, Hagadah ('telling'), Blessing, and Melchisedek ('righteousness').

It was this Seder Meal that Jesus and the disciples were celebrating in the upper room that night. It was at the conclusion of that meal that Jesus himself gave two of the symbols of the Seder meal a new meaning to those who followed him.

He took the bread, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, **'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'**

Then he took a cup with wine. He drank from it and gave it to his disciples saying, **'Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'**

And of course, from it was born one of the two Sacraments of the reformation – the Holy Communion.

Interestingly, in the Protestant Churches, we only recognise two sacraments- what are known as the "Dominical commands" – so named because Jesus ordered his church to perform them.

Holy Communion and Baptism

The Roman Catholic Church has a further five: Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony.

It is significant that Jesus took the elements for the Holy Communion from the Passover festival. Because in Passover, the children of God celebrated God's Salvation, a salvation which resulted in the Israelites being released from the slavery of Egypt.

So, in Holy Communion we, the children of God celebrate the God's Salvation through Jesus' death on the Cross. Indeed, the salvation Jesus offers has resulted in all mankind having the capability of being freed from the slavery of sin.

In other words, the first Passover is an Old Testament prelude to the events that are to take place after this meal that Jesus shares with his disciples. Jesus' death upon the Cross – which will bring the Salvation of God to all His people.

And so, it was highly significant that Jesus died at Passover. For it reminds us of what God has done, through Jesus.

As John put it, ¹⁶ **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.'**

Or as Paul puts it, **'but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us'**

So today, let us give thanks for that wonderful gift of God – our Salvation – Eternal Life that cost Jesus dearly – as we recall tomorrow on Good Friday.

Let us pray,

A Communion Prayer

O Lord God, heavenly Father,
 we praise and thank you for your grace
 that through your Son Jesus Christ
 you established this supper
 in which we eat his body and drink his blood.
 By your Holy Spirit, help us
 to use this gift worthily,
 to confess and forsake our sins,
 to confidently believe that we are forgiven through Christ,
 and to grow in faith and love day by day
 until we come at last to the joy of eternal salvation,
 through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.
 Amen.

Source: Veit Dietrich, 1506-1549

Hymn # 537: "Twas on That Night" (V 1,3,5)

'Twas on that night when doomed to know
 the eager rage of ev'ry foe,
 that night in which he was betrayed,
 the Savior of the world took bread.

"My broken body thus I give
 for you, for all. Take, eat, and live.
 And oft the sacred rite renew
 that brings my wondrous love to view."

"My blood I thus pour forth," he cries,
 "to cleanse the soul in sin that lies;
 in this the covenant is sealed,
 and heav'n's eternal grace revealed.

Communion

Invitation to the Table

Why do we give thanks and praise before this table?

We give thanks for God's work of creation, liberation, and salvation.

It is indeed right, our duty and delight, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, O holy Lord, eternal God. You created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them; you made us in your own image; and in countless ways you show us your mercy. Therefore, with choirs of angels and the whole company of heaven, we worship and adore your glorious name, joining our voices in their unending praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

All glory and blessing are yours, O holy God, for in your mercy you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ. He took our human nature and suffered death on the cross for our redemption. There he made a perfect sacrifice for the sins for the whole world. We praise you that before he suffered and died, our Savior gave us this holy sacrament and commanded us to continue it until he comes again.

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread. After giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

The same night Jesus took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me."

What do we remember at this table?

We remember God's gracious love for us, Christ's death and resurrection for us, and the Spirit's tender care for us.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Dying, you destroyed our death;
rising, you restored our life.
Lord Jesus, come in glory.**

Merciful God, pour out your Holy Spirit on these gifts of bread and wine, that in eating and drinking we may be made one with Christ and one another.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.

For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,

Forever and ever. Amen.

Hand Washing & taking of the elements

On the night of his arrest, Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment and set an example for them by washing their feet.

In this act of service, he reminded his followers to serve one another.

Therefore, you are invited to be washed and to wash one another, to be served and to serve each another.

To remember your baptism, and your calling to follow Christ's example.

Prayer after Communion

God of grace,

your Son Jesus Christ

left us this holy meal of bread and wine

in which we share his body and blood.

May we who have celebrated this sign of his great love

show in our lives the fruits of his redemption;

through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn #543: "Here, O My Lord, I See Thee"

Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face;

here would I touch and handle things unseen;

here grasp with firmer hand eternal grace

and all my weariness upon Thee lean.

Here would I feed upon the bread of God,

here drink with Thee the royal wine of heav'n;

here would I lay aside each earthly load,

here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiv'n.

We have no help but thine; nor do we need
 Another arm but Thine to lean upon;
 It is enough, my Lord, enough indeed;
 Our strength is in Thy might, Thy might alone.

Pastoral Prayer

God of love,
 it is because of your immense love for us that
 you stooped to be our servant and willingly suffered to give us life.
 For that love we give you thanks.
 We also praise you for the way that love is evidenced
 in creation . . .
 in our community . . .
 in our church . . .
 in our lives . . .
 in the events of this Holy Week . . .
 God of love,
 you have given us a new command to love each other.
 Help us to show that love
 in our care of creation . . .
 to the nations of the world . . .
 to our nation and its leaders . . .
 in this community . . .
 through the church universal . . .
 through this local church in its ministry . . .
 to persons with needs . . .
 In all our thoughts and actions
 may we be your servants and reflect your love.
 We pray this in the name of your servant Son, Jesus Christ,
 who lives and reigns with you forever. **Amen.**

Benediction

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father,
 who loved us and through grace gave us
 eternal comfort and good hope,
 comfort your hearts and strengthen them
 in every good work and word. **Amen.**