

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL
Wallace, Idaho

Alice M.C. Ling, Pastor

April 1, 2021

Maundy Thursday

PRELUDE “Go to Dark Gethsemane”

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to Maundy Thursday, one of the most sacred nights of the year. We gather tonight around the table, as Jesus and his friends gathered to share what they later learned was their last supper together. We gather to remember the ways in which Jesus pledged his life and his love, his body and his blood to his friends forever, and the ways in which, one by one, they failed him. I hope you have some bread with you and a cup from which you can drink. And as always, if you would like to follow along, and share in the words and singing, I invite you to print or read along on the PDF that accompanies this video.

Also a reminder that we will gather to celebrate the resurrection on Sunday, April 4, in our building at 9:30 am. We ask that people wear masks and maintain 6-feet of social distance, as we return to worshiping in one place at one time. Let us worship God.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Why is this night different?

Though we are scattered in homes, apartments, households, still we can gather in God’s heart.

Why is this worship different?

We cannot gather as God’s household, yet we can still find ourselves together in God’s heart and love.

Why is this meal different?

Alone, with family, with just our pets, we begin to understand the weariness, the uncertainty, the questions which sat around that table long ago with Jesus and his friends.

Why is this night, this worship, this meal the same?

We are still God’s beloved, who is with us in these moments, these days, these nights.

We are still the followers of Jesus, who would wash our hearts of our doubts and fears.

We are still comforted by the Spirit, who blesses the meal we will share this night.

(Thom M. Shuman, Lectionary Liturgies)

SONG “Beneath the Cross of Jesus”

Beneath the cross of Jesus I gladly take my stand,
The shadow of a mighty Rock Within a weary land;
A home within the wilderness, A rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat, And the burden of the day.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (in unison)

Ever gracious God, we gather this evening as friends gathered with Jesus in an upper room long ago. We come bearing the marks of a bitter and broken world. We come from anonymous places, with dry and thirsty spirits. Remind us in the breaking of the bread of our need and of your sufficiency. Refresh us and make us whole with the cup of forgiveness. Draw us nearer to each other in mutual service and closer to you in the covenant of faithfulness and thanksgiving. As the night advances, deepen in us a sense of your steadfast love for us in Jesus Christ, our friend and redeemer. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

One fact remains that does not change: God has loved you, loves you now, and will always love you. This is the good news that brings new life.

MEDITATION

As you think about the night we're here to remember, who do you most identify with? Maybe that's such a loaded question tonight that it's unfair to even ask it, but don't bail on me yet. There are the two unidentified disciples who tend to the details, secure the room, make arrangements for the food to be delivered on time, set the table, arrange the pillows, make sure everything is just right. All of the twelve are here, the ones who are often front and center, leading the way, Jesus' inner circle, alongside the ones who are only named once and left totally undefined and unknown. There's James and John, hoping for some recognition, maybe even promotion to the seats of honor to the right and left of Jesus, something that will make their mother proud. Peter, the first to show real signs of comprehension and insight, also the one who's nerve falters when it matters most. Judas, who we've painted all shades of evil, and maybe he was. But is there a chance he was just holding fast to what he'd been taught, and unable to let go and move on from the way they'd always done things? And yes, Jesus is here. If ever there's a night when we wouldn't begin to identify with Jesus, this is it, both because of the immensity of his love and faithfulness, but also the enormity of his suffering. Nope, we'll stand back and admire, but can't pretend to even stand in his shadow.

As I approach this night, after the year that we've had, I find myself listening in new ways. As I look at that circle of thirteen, I see the ones who have worked tirelessly to tend the sick, feed the hungry, house the homeless, put the details in place and see that needs are met. There are those who struggled to follow, to give everything they had, to do what was right, but it was hard. And lonely. Sometimes the compassion and concern for others filled their hearts to overflowing, but sometimes, they just couldn't take anymore in. Their own hungers and hurts were too much, and so they focused on themselves and ignored the impact on others. I recognize those whose eyes refused to stay open while Jesus agonized in prayer, but it wasn't really their eyes; it was their hearts that slept. They'd given so much they had nothing left to give, and so they crawled inside themselves and quietly shut down. There are those who have lashed out in violence, sometimes cruel and senseless, occasionally well intentioned and protective.

Pilate asked Jesus to define truth, and I hear echoes of news reports that leave my head spinning as I wonder what galaxy they found that version of events in... all the while knowing some folks wonder the same about the sources and perspectives I depend on and listen to. Who do we believe and where do we turn and how do we know truth from lies from fiction?

Fear and fatigue, self-absorption and impatience, selfishness and selflessness, confusion and chaos, generous service and unmeasured sacrifice, confident courage and creative collaboration, pandemic weary and touch starved, it's all here. We're all here, in need of mercy and grace, healing and hope. And Jesus is here, reaching to us as he reached for the twelve: calling and coaching, challenging and cajoling, comforting and cradling. He washes the dirt from our feet and the grime from our hearts; he heals our wounds, nourishes our souls, transforms our shortcomings and multiplies our efforts. Through his life and in his death, he leads us to God, wraps us in love and welcomes us home. Thanks be to God. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Gracious God, as those who strive to follow Jesus in our living and to trust your power in our dying, we gather to reflect upon the life that ended on a cross.

We recognize in ourselves the strengths and weaknesses of Jesus' disciples: although they loved him, they disappointed and failed him. And yet, gathering with these imperfect friends at this last meal Jesus washed their feet in service, and then extended the bread and cup to each. Jesus called them to love one another, and invited them to share in his very life and in his acceptance of the road ahead.

We are humbled, honored and inspired by the deep love Christ extended to the world, and we take seriously the calling to be the body of Christ today. Forgive us when we disappoint and fail you, and guide us back to a place of trust and faithful living. Grant us the vision to see the world as you see it, with love and compassion for each creature and all of your creation. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray to you: Our Father. . . (Rev. Kelly Burd, **United Church of Christ** website.)

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR (debts)

SONG "Let Us Break Bread Together"

Let us break bread together on our knees; Let us break bread together on our knees;
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink the cup together on our knees; let us drink the cup together on our knees;
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Invitation

This was just a cup filled with wine (*gesture towards the cup*)

this was just ordinary bread, baked for guests (*gesture towards the bread*)

until Jesus took them, took and drank from the cup, even though it was his cup of pain, filled with the agony of the world; took and broke the bread – even though his body was too young to be broken.

This (*gesture towards self*), and these (*gesture to the community*) would be ordinary lives unless the bread, unless the wine, is poured into them: and the mystery of grace takes place.

Come, not because you fully understand, but because you need to reach out and receive the life that is offered to you. (Ann Siddall, <http://stillpointsa.org.au/prayer/prayers-and-liturgies/>)

Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them to God!

Let's give thanks to the source of life!

We bring our thankful praise!

We praise and thank you, Eternal One, Love that will not be contained. For you created the earth: it's grandeur, its detail, its delicate balance. And you created us, women and men, to tend and protect and delight in it.

And when we forgot our beginnings, neglected our purpose and lost our way, you sent prophets to call us back and laws to illumine our path and finally came yourself to show us how to live and to demonstrate the magnitude of your love for us.

Love that will not be contained. Love that will not give up on us. Love that will journey into the darkest places, even the grave, to find us.

And so, we lift our voices to join with nature's song and the great chorus of witnesses on earth and in heaven:

Holy, holy, holy, Love that will not be contained, heaven and earth are filled with your glory, Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the one who is risen from the dead. Hosanna in the highest!

The story of the Lord's Supper

Let's hear, again, the story of Jesus' supper with his disciples on the night before he died, as it's been recorded by the writer of the Gospel of Matthew:

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, [*take bread*] and after blessing it he broke it, [*break bread*] gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, [*take cup*] and after giving thanks he gave it to them, [*lift cup*] saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Blessing and sharing the bread and wine

And so we pray... Come, Holy Spirit pour out your blessing on our bread and cup and on us, your gathered people. We don't need an altar, a silver chalice or starched table linen. It's your presence that makes these ordinary things holy. Amen.

Here is bread: broken, as the body of Christ was broken; broken, as the heart of God was broken; broken, as the seal of the tomb was broken; broken to make us whole. The body of Christ, broken for us. [*we eat the bread*]

Here is wine: a cup that brings us together, even in our social distancing; a cup of forgiveness and blessing. The blood of Christ, poured out for us. [*we drink from the cup*]

(Cara Heafey, worshipwords.co.uk)

Prayer of Thanksgiving (in unison)

Lord Jesus Christ, you have put your life into our hands; now we put our lives into yours. Take us, renew and remake us. What we have been is past; what we shall be, through you, still awaits us. Lead us on. Take us with you. Amen.

SONG "Let Us Break Bread Together"

Let us praise God together on our knees; Let us praise God together on our knees;
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.

MATTHEW 26:20-25

Judy Hofmann

When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?" He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so."

SONG "Kyrie Eleison" (Lord, have mercy on me)

Russian Orthodox

Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.

MATTHEW 26: 31-35

Jennifer Carrico

Then Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written,

'I will strike the shepherd,

and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you." Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said all the disciples.

SONG “*Journey to Gethsemane*”

James Montgomery, Richard Redhead

Journey to Gethsemane, go and feel the tempter’s power;
Your redeemer’s conflict see, watch the anguish of this hour;
Do not hide or turn away: learn from Jesus how to pray.

MARK 14:32-41

Alice Holmes

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

SONG “*O Lord, hear my prayer*”

Taize Community

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. When I call answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and listen to me.

MATTHEW 26:47-52

Mike Branstetter

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him." At once he came up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to do." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

SONG “*When Jesus Wept*”

William Billings

When Jesus wept, the falling tear in mercy flowed beyond all bound;
When Jesus groaned, a trembling fear seized all the guilty world around.

LUKE 22:54-62

Lou Larson

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

SONG “*Before Your Cross, O Jesus*” vs. 2

Ferdinand Q. Blanchard, Frederic C. Maker

The hopes that lead us onward, the fears that hold us back,
our will to do great things for God, the courage that we lack,

The faith we keep in goodness, our love, as low or pure,
on all, the judgment of the cross falls steady clear and sure.

JOHN 18:33-38a

Rick Ehram

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

SONG "What Wondrous Love is This?"

American Folk Hymn

What wondrous love is this, O my soul! O my soul!
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this! that caused the Lord of bliss
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

MATTHEW 27:20-26

Joyce Dunphy

Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

SONG "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

Isaac Watts, Lowell Mason

When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

MARK 15:16-20

Bruce Flohr

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

SONG "Were You There?"

African American Spiritual

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

SILENCE

CLOSING PRAYER

Christ Jesus, One of us betrayed you,
another denied you,
and all of us have forsaken you.

Yet you have remained faithful to death,
even death upon a cross.

Strengthen us so we do not turn aside
but follow you through sunlight and shadow alike.
For the final victory belongs to you, Christ Jesus. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Go in peace.

May Jesus Christ, who for our sake became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you this night and forever. Amen.