

Topeka First UMC

Maundy Thursday Reflection

April 9, 2020

Available as an audio guide at
www.forthegoodofthecity.org/podcast

Welcome

Maundy Thursday is both a day of reflection and celebration. It marks some of the final moments that Jesus spent with his closest followers, the Disciples. After they had entered the city of Jerusalem to shouts of Hosanna on Palm Sunday, Christ and his dearest friends gathered in the upper room to celebrate the Passover. This is not a religious holiday that we, as Christians, celebrate today. Still, it was an important time for Jesus and his Disciples as it celebrated the freedom of the Jewish people from their slavery in Egypt. It serves as a reminder of God's work on behalf of creation and remains one of the most important holidays in the Jewish Tradition.

The story of Maundy Thursday is captured for us in the Gospel of John, chapter 13. Throughout this guide, scripture will be read, and reflections will be offered. At different times, you will be asked to stand or sit, move around your house, pray out loud, and reflect silently to yourself. This time of guided reflection was designed to be done alone or with others. However you are engaging this time, it is helpful if you can set aside 15 uninterrupted minutes and focus your mind, body, and spirit on the redeeming work of Christ.

Though this guide was built for the entire family, we have included a section specifically designed for children. You will find this resource at the end of the booklet.

Reflection Guide

Start by
praying aloud:

Gracious God, on the night before he suffered, Jesus established the sacrament of communion, creating it so that we might forever remember the sacrifice made by your Son for us. With gratitude, we receive the gift of communion thankfully and in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord who gives us eternal life. Amen.

As you read the first passage from John's gospel, make your way to the front door of your home.

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. - John 13:1

As the final hours of Christ's life approached, he reflected on the love he felt for God's creation. As John writes, "he loved them to the end." We are reminded, in this opening passage, how deeply God loves creation. Look out your front door. Spend a moment quietly reflecting on the vastness and intricacy of God's creation. The air and the earth, the birds and the bugs, the binding of ecosystems and the lush reaches of nature. God created and loves it all. As the inheritors of this creation, how do you reflect that love? Do you love the world in the way that Christ loved it? Do you love your neighbors the way Christ loved his? Think deeply about your relationship with the rest of creation and ponder the question, is it based on love?

As you read the second passage, find a sink. Feel free to go to a restroom or the kitchen, wherever you feel most comfortable. Maybe turn on the water and listen to it flow as you read.

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

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? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. - John 13:2-15

The power of this moment is often lost on us as modern readers. Take a second to think about the realities of the first century, 2,000 years ago. There were no paved streets, no showers, no well-developed concepts of hygiene. Shoes were little more than sandals and socks were non-existent. That means peoples feet were disgusting. One of the lowest forms of service was to wash someone else's feet because they were caked in mud, cracked, rough, and odious. Despite that, Jesus lowered himself, literally and figuratively, and washed the feet of his disciples. Why did he do this? Take a second and think about it.

Jesus washed the feet as an example for the Disciples and us today. We are all called to humble ourselves and serve others in the image of Jesus. Serving others probably doesn't look like foot washing anymore, but take a moment of silence to think about ways that you can serve the people around you and in our community.

As you read the next passage, find a mirror in your home. Maybe it is in the restroom, at the end of the hallway, or in your bedroom. Wherever it is, go to it and look at your reflection as you read.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little 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.’ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” - John 13:31b-35

We sometimes forget that when Jesus was talking to the Disciples, he was also talking to us. As you look in the mirror, remember that Jesus loves you. All your quirks and imperfections, everything that you wish you could change and everything that makes you who you are is loved by Christ. In his final moments, Jesus chose to remind us of that love. So remember, Jesus loves you.

Because Jesus loves us, he asked us to help in showing others that he loves them too. His final command was to show others that we are followers of Jesus through our obvious love for one another and the rest of creation. Just as Jesus loves us, we are called to love others. This is not always easy. People make mistakes, people fall short of their own expectations and the expectations we have of them, and people hurt us. The pain can be physical or emotional, either way, it can be devastating. But we are loved so deeply by Christ that we are asked to love others, even those who hurt us.

As you look at your reflection, understand this; you are a living mirror of God's love in the world. It is through you that people can experience the life giving grace of God. If that feels like an overwhelming responsibility, rest easy, you don't do it alone. Walking by your side is every other follower of Christ and the spirit of God which gives you strength to do all things.

As you read the final scripture, this passage from Paul's letter to the Church in Corinth, walk to the place you eat most of your meals. For some this will be the kitchen, for others the dining room, for others still the living room. Wherever it is, go there and sit as if you were going to eat a meal.

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, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In 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." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Christ knew that we would need help to remember the gift he gave to us. So, on his final night, he offered the Disciples a new tradition. Jesus took the bread, broke it, and told us that the bread is a symbol of his body which was beaten and broken for us. When we eat bread, we are invited to remember Jesus' final moments and the sacrifice he made on our behalf. He then took the cup of wine and told us that it represents his blood, which was poured out for us as a living sacrifice. Every time we drink wine, juice, or even water, we are invited to reflect on the gift of new life given to us through Jesus.

There will be an opportunity to celebrate Holy Communion digitally at www.forthegoodofthecity.org/livestream at 6:45 p.m. on Maundy Thursday, April 9, 2020. As we all live newly confined to our homes, take the opportunity to experience communion in a deeper and more personal way. The world is full of doubt and uncertainty. You are likely feeling great amount of anxiety and pain. Through it all, we are reminded that Christ offers us new life through the God who created and loves us, and nothing can take that away.

Spend some final moments in silence. You may not have given yourself much room to sit and quietly reflect over the last couple of weeks. Do so now. If it's helpful, set a timer for a couple of minutes and breathe deeply as you reflect on the eternal promises of God. When you're done, return to your day and the tasks at hand but remember, God loves you and through Christ you have been given new life.

If you plan on joining the church in Thursday's celebration of Communion, be sure to have some sort of juice (or water) and bread ready for yourself and anyone who will be joining you.

Family Content

Think: Read Mark 14:22-25, 32-46 and Matthew 26: 26-30, 36-50

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

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. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.” All of them deserted him and fled.

The first time listen for what is happening. Who is there? Why are they gathered?

The second time use your imagination and what you know about early times to picture yourself there. Draw a picture or write/tell a story about what is going on at The Last Supper.

Creative Space:

Feel:

How does the story of the Last Supper Make you feel?

What was Jesus feeling?

How did the disciples feel?

Do:

Share a meal with your family.

Pray as a family.

Learn about Passover.

Make a plan to share a meal with someone you love. (Might be by phone or computer.)