

MAUNDY THURSDAY WORSHIP

April 9, 2020

Cross of Glory Lutheran Church, Brooklyn Center, MN

CONFESSION and FORGIVENESS

God's love for the world has been revealed in Jesus Christ, who certainly loved us and gave us a new commandment: *"...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."*

Merciful God, we confess that so often our discipleship has been weak...when we have failed to serve as Jesus served;

forgive us.

When we have failed to love one another as Jesus loves us;

forgive us.

When we have been happy to proclaim our devotion to Christ with our lips and then denied him by our actions;

forgive us.

Merciful God,

Empower us by your Spirit to be steady and true to you in every time of trial; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jesus said: *"I came not to judge the world, but save the world" and "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."*

The good news therefore is this: In Jesus Christ, we are loved and we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are Jesus' disciples, following him even as he moves toward the cross.

Even as he wraps a towel around his waist.

Even as he kneels to wash the filth from the feet of his friends.

We are Jesus' disciples, longing to be faithful even as the night grows dark.

Even as betrayers loom

Even as the powers that oppose the way of Christ press in around us.

We are Jesus' disciples, struggling to love others even as Jesus loved us.

We are Jesus' disciples, gathered here to worship God: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer.

Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray...**though you are God, with all the influence and status that the name implies, you refused to pull rank, and parade your power among us. Instead, you chose to set down into our experience, living among us, as one of us, with all the struggle and suffering that goes with being human. More than that, you adopted the role of slave, washing feet, serving people of no reputation or social standing, and giving of yourself completely. As incredible as it sounds, you are the God who serves, and we can respond in no other way than to give ourselves to you in praise. Amen.**

GOSPEL READING

John 13:1-17,34-35

(please find the reading in your Bible)

SERMON

“Love One Another Thursday”

Blessed Maundy Thursday!

A common question that is asked during Holy Week is about this night, the Thursday before Easter.

Why the word Maundy? What does Maundy mean? People get Palm Sunday and Good Friday and Easter, but Maundy Thursday is often unclear. After all, who uses “Maundy” in their daily life? So, what does “Maundy” mean?

Before we talk about what the word means, we want to go back to the story from our Gospel for today. In it Jesus has come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. As they gather at the table, Jesus already knows what is going to happen. He knows that by the end of the night one of his disciples will betray him, one will deny him three times, and all of them will leave him alone in his hour of greatest agony.

Yet, here is Jesus on this night breaking the bread and pouring the cup. Eating with them. Blessing them. And because there is no slave present to wash their feet before the meal, Jesus gets down on his knees and washes his disciples’ feet. One by one, Jesus kneels on the floor in front of each disciple. One by one, the water of his love washed over the feet of each of them. No one is left out. Judas. Peter. The ones who say nothing. All are washed. All are loved.

In a world where we are often surrounded by messages of retaliation, or vengeance, or an eye for an eye cries for justice, Jesus gives us a different message. Here Jesus gives his disciples an object lesson, an example for them and for us today. You see, Jesus is well aware that this is his last night with the disciples and there is one final lesson he aims to teach them. He says to them: **“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.”**

Here’s where the word “maundy” comes in. Because what do you do if you’re Jesus? What do you do if you know you are not going to be around much longer, and you have to tell the people you love the most, the ones who followed you, the ones who sometimes make big mistakes, how to keep moving in the right direction after you are gone?

The word “maundy” comes from the Latin word *mandatum* which means “mandate” or a “commandment.” When we are talking about Maundy Thursday we’re talking about “mandate Thursday.” We’re talking about the night that Jesus told his disciples exactly what he expected of them.

Anybody else at this moment might have said to his followers something like, “avenge my death”, or “strike back...don’t let them get away with this”, or “make sure there’s a payback. But not Jesus! The mandate, the mandatory thing Jesus tells us to do in this passage is: **“...love one another, just as I have loved you.”**

This probably wouldn’t do well at the box office. It wouldn’t soar to the top of the New York Times bestsellers list. It wouldn’t get a Nielsen rating. Yet, it is a story that transcends all of these things. Because it is the beginning of a story about what happens when the world does its worst through violence, and hatred and fear, and yet LOVE WINS ANYWAY. The story of Jesus is one of love that was rejected and buried, and yet was still too strong to stay in the ground.

I don’t want to be so bold as to think it’s my job to rename Christian holy days. If it were, however, I might change the name of Maundy Thursday. I might change it from this word that none of us really know and never use to something that we would understand. What about calling this day “Love One Another Thursday”, or “The Last Thing Christ Really Wanted Us to Know Thursday.”

This is the message we as Christians need to hear. We don’t need to hide it behind fancy terms. We don’t need to just check it off as another night in holy week. We need to hear that this is how Christ said other people would know us: **by how we love one another.**

In truth, however, following Jesus command to love one another won't always come easily for us. At times it may perhaps be the most difficult undertaking of our lives. It is a dangerous business- we cannot do it without God's help. In the wonderful children's book, **The Velveteen Rabbit** by Margery Williams, there is a profound conversation between a toy rabbit and a skin horse:

"What is REAL?" asks the Rabbit one day. The horse replies, "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real." Does it hurt?" the Rabbit asks. "Sometimes," responds the horse with honesty. "It doesn't happen all at once," says the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

Like the Velveteen Rabbit, we too at times can get pretty ragged in the business of loving others, but when we are in God's will for our lives, it is worth it!

One day a kindergarten teacher read her class a story called, "Big". Then she asked her students, "What makes you feel big?" "Bugs make me feel big," yelled one young student. "Ants" hollered another. "Mosquitoes," called out one more. The teacher, trying to bring some order back to the class, started calling on children with their hands up. Pointing to one little girl, the teacher said, "Yes, dear, what makes you feel big?" "My mommy," was her reply. "How does your mommy make you feel big?" quizzed the teacher. "That's easy," said the child. "When she hugs me and says, I love you, Jessica."

People of God, love measures our stature. The more we love, the bigger we are. Jesus is our supreme example of this: by humbling himself he became big. By loving us, he makes us feel big. And the more we love, the bigger we are!

May we follow Christ's example and mandate by loving others- not some, but all! In the name of Jesus, AMEN

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Loving, listening God, ever-attentive to the voices of those in need, we call on your name so that we might live. Now hear our prayer:

For the church that bears Christ's name, that the world may know we are his disciples by the love that we have for one another. Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

For leaders of nations and all persons in authority, that their lives may be marked by Christ-like service and love. Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

For all those who are being tested for and being treated for the coronavirus, as well as their families and loved ones, surround them, O God, with your love and care. Be especially present with the families who have lost loved ones. Keep safe all medical people who are caring for those with this virus. Lord in your mercy.

hear our prayer.

For those who are hungry and thirsty this day and for those who have too much, that we may learn to share your generous gifts, O God. Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Attend to the needs of the whole world with your saving grace, and lead us all into new life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us always to pray: **Our Father, who art in heaven.....**

Go in peace.

Thanks be to God.

(This is an abbreviated version of the Maundy Thursday service. Please go to the church web site: <http://crossofglory.us> for a recording of the full service.)

GOOD FRIDAY WORSHIP

April 10, 2020

Cross of Glory Lutheran Church, Brooklyn Center, MN

SILENCE

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, on this day we gather to remember the suffering death of Jesus. He was despised and rejected, oppressed and afflicted, yet he was prepared to be wounded for our transgressions.

We come overwhelmed by the depth of Jesus' love for us, and his commitment to defeat evil, even when that meant his own suffering and his own death.

In his willingness to show us the depth of God's love for all, he poured himself out to death, even death on a cross, and so, in response to such love and sacrifice, we commit ourselves as his disciples to overcome evil with good, suffering with wholeness, and oppression with justice. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 27:27-31, 38-54 (please find the reading in your Bible)

MESSAGE

"When the Light Went Out"

As I read again this week the account of Jesus' crucifixion, I was struck by the words, "***There was darkness over the whole land from the sixth hour to the ninth hour.***" When Jesus died the sun's light failed and there was darkness over all the earth.

Light has always been significant. When creating the world God said, "*Let there be light!*" And the light tore through the darkness and danced with the Spirit-wind moving over the face of the waters. Then in the coming of Jesus we are told that he is "*the light of the world*" and that his light "*shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.*"

Today however, in our Gospel for this Good Friday, we are told that the light went out. It went out:

while Jesus was interrogated by Pilate,

while the crowds were demanding that the outlaw Barabbas be pardoned and Jesus be condemned,

while Jesus was dragging his cross toward the Skull Hill known as Golgotha,

while the soldiers- just doing their jobs- were nailing him up,

while the soldiers were gambling for his clothes,

while he was crying out, wounded and thirsty,

while he bowed his head and died,

while it was all going down, few knew that it was the light of world being snuffed out.

The Romans crucified Jews all day every day. We know, however, that this one was different. This one was special. What his mother Mary knew, what the other Mary's knew, what his beloved disciples knew, what Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus the Pharisee knew was that the light of their world had been snuffed out. Jesus had become for them a light shining in the darkness and he had become for many the glow, the radiance, the brilliance that allowed them to see.

Yet, from the shadow of the cross, watching the light go out, there is Good News! The cross is how God descends fully and finally into the human condition. God experiences weakness firsthand. And helplessness. And humiliation. Shame. Injustice. Betrayal. Abandonment. Woundedness. And finally, death itself.

No wonder, then, that we love to sing "*In the Cross of Christ I Glory.*" No wonder the apostle Paul would write to the Galatians, "*But God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of Christ.*" No wonder, then, that new Lutheran church start back in 1956, in Brooklyn Center, MN would choose as the name of its congregation, Cross of Glory Lutheran Church.

It is here on the cross that we watch God become fully one with our human condition. So that from now on, when we cry out to God from our darkness, when we suffer injustices, when we have been left alone, when we have been sold out, when our bodies and minds still bear wounds that time has not healed, when we walk through the valley of the shadow of difficulty or death, we can cry out to a God who can say to us, "*My child, I know. Oh, how do I know! They did it to me, too.*"

The Good News we are able to whisper to Jesus' mother and the beloved disciples at the foot of the cross is, *This is not the end. God won't let this be the final word.* We might also add, "*God hasn't forsaken him. God hasn't forsaken you. God hasn't forsaken us. God is right here. In the middle of all this. In this darkness with us. We are not alone. God is present, right here, right now.*"

So, beloved people of God, whatever darkness you may be dealing with today..... be it fear, anxiety, loneliness, loss, heartache, boredom.... know that Easter is coming but until then, the Good News is that even when the light is going out, God is still clinging to you in the darkness. Thanks be to God. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY INTERCESSIONS

Lord Jesus, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross, that all might come within the reach of your loving embrace. Clothe us in your Spirit, that we, stretching out our hands in loving service for others may bring them the assurance of your care and mercy. Lord in your mercy....

hear our prayer.

Almighty and eternal God, you created humanity so that all may long to know you and find peace in you. Grant that all may recognize the signs of your love and grace in the world and in the lives of your followers, and gladly acknowledge you as the one true God. Lord in your mercy...

hear our prayer.

O God, our peace and strength, we pray for our world as we face the uncertainties because of the coronavirus. Protect those who are most vulnerable, especially those who are currently sick or have tested positive. Grant strength and wisdom to health care workers, especially as their work puts them at great risk. Guide us as we consider how best to respond to this virus in our families, workplaces, congregations and communities. Give us courage to face these days not with fear but with compassion, concern and acts of service, trusting that you abide with us always. Lord in your mercy...

hear our prayer.

Hear the prayers of all who call on you in any trouble, that they may have the joy of receiving your help in their need. We ask all of this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

Our Father who art in heaven.....

Go in peace. Christ is with you!

Thanks be to God.

(This is an abbreviated version of the service. Please go to the church web site: <http://crossofglory.us> for the full Good Friday worship.)