

Thursday, March 20, 2008
Maundy Thursday

INTRODUCTION

With nightfall our Lenten observance comes to an end, and we gather with Christians around the world to begin the Three Days during which we participate once again in the saving power of Jesus' passing over from death to life. At the heart of the Maundy Thursday liturgy is Jesus' commandment to love one another. As Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, we are called to follow his example as we humbly care for one another, especially the poor and the unloved. At the Lord's table we remember Jesus' sacrifice of his life, even as we are called to offer ourselves in love for the life of the world.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW)

Holy God, source of all love,
on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave us a new commandment,
to love one another as he loves us.
Write this commandment in our hearts,
and give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all,
your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

READINGS

Exodus 12:1–4[5–10] 11–14

Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19

I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. (Ps. 116:13)

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

John 13:1–17, 31b–35

FIRST READING: Exodus 12:1–4[5–10] 11–14

Israel remembered its deliverance from slavery in Egypt by celebrating the festival of Passover. This festival featured the Passover lamb, whose blood was used as a sign to protect God's people from the threat of death. The early church described the Lord's supper using imagery from the Passover, especially in portraying Jesus as the lamb who delivers God's people from sin and death.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ²This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

PSALM (ELW): Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19

¹I love the LORD, who has ¹heard my voice,
and listened to my ¹supplication,
²**for the LORD has given ¹ear to me
whenever ¹I called. R**
¹²How shall I re- ¹pay the LORD
for all the good things God has ¹done for me?
¹³**I will lift the cup ¹of salvation
and call on the name ¹of the LORD.**
¹⁴I will fulfill my vows ¹to the LORD
in the presence of ¹all God's people.
¹⁵**Precious in your ¹sight, O LORD,
is the death ¹of your servants.**
¹⁶O LORD, truly I ¹am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your handmaid; you have freed me ¹from my bonds.
¹⁷**I will offer you the sacrifice ¹of thanksgiving
and call upon the name ¹of the LORD. R**
¹⁸I will fulfill my vows ¹to the LORD
in the presence of ¹all God's people,
¹⁹**in the courts of ¹the LORD's house,
in the midst of you, ¹O Jerusalem. R**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

In the bread and cup of the Lord's supper, we experience intimate fellowship with Christ and with one another, because it involves his body given for us and the new covenant in his blood. Faithful participation in this meal is a living proclamation of Christ's death until he comes in the future.

²³For 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, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In 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." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

GOSPEL: John 13:1–17, 31b–35

The story of the last supper in John's gospel recalls a remarkable event not mentioned elsewhere: Jesus performs the duty of a slave, washing the feet of his disciples and urging them to do the same for one another.

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. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then 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. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus 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." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."
¹²After 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?" ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord — and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.

¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. ^{31b}"Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little 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.' ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Invited by our Lord Jesus Christ to love and serve one another, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

For the church, that, marked with Christ's cross and fed at Christ's table, we may love one another through acts of humble service. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For creation, that its water sources provide for cleansing and renewal, and that our stewardship enables clean water to flow freely for every living thing. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For the world, that governments and religions marked by unjust divisions might dwell in unity and respect the dignity of all. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For the hungry in body or spirit (*especially*). Bend low to hear their cries, and satisfy them with your goodness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For this congregation, (*especially those preparing for baptism*), that we who are captive to sin and death may find freedom and life in the body and blood of Christ.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

For the saints, that together with them we may pass over from death to life and celebrate the eternal feast of the Lamb. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Gracious God, as a mother hen you gather us into one body in Christ. Gather these prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ, our master and servant.

Amen.

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