



Preparing, Feasting, Sending: **A Maundy Thursday Liturgy for the Evening Meal**

Preparing

The corona virus has made us all far more aware of how often and how long we wash our hands. What was often a mindless routine has been transformed into an act of care for ourselves and others.

In Jesus' day, foot-washing was an act of service performed by the lowest in society. When Jesus took the towel and basin to wash his disciples' feet, he demonstrated a radical act of love and compassion.

Read John 13:1-17 in your own Bible or the Common English Bible Translation excerpt below.

Before the Festival of Passover, Jesus knew that his time had come to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them fully. Jesus and his disciples were sharing the evening meal. So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You don't understand what I'm doing now, but you will understand later."

After he washed the disciples' feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, "Do you know what I've done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you speak correctly, because I am. If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do. I assure you, servants aren't greater than their master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them. Since you know these things, you will be happy if you do them."

Take time to wash your hands.

Jesus knew it was important to prepare, so important that he sent his disciples ahead to get ready for the Passover meal. We didn't have much time to prepare for our lives under quarantine, but Holy Week offers us the opportunity to prepare for Easter. Preparation in itself is an act of love for ourselves and those around us.

Read Luke 22:7-13 in your own Bible or from the Common English Bible translation below.

The Day of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John with this task: "Go and prepare for us to eat the Passover meal." They said to him, "Where do you want us to prepare it?"

Jesus replied, "When you go into the city, a man carrying a water jar will meet you. Follow him to the house he enters. Say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher says to you, "Where is the guestroom where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?"' He will show you a large upstairs room, already furnished. Make preparations there." They went and found everything just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

Prepare for your meal (cook, order takeout, set the table, etc.)

Feasting

This meal is a reminder of the promises made to us in the sacrament of Communion—that all belong to God, that God's love is stronger than death, and that one day, all will be fed.

We're used to the traditional elements of bread and juice when we share communion together. Bread and wine were commonly found at the dinner table in Jesus' time, and they carried special significance at the annual Passover celebration. Tonight, we'll use what we have at our dinner tables to celebrate this meal together.

Read Luke 22:14-20 from your own Bible or from the Common English Bible translation below.

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

As you serve the meal, consider saying: This is the body of Christ, broken for you. This is the cup of salvation, given for you.

Sing or say your favorite dinner blessing.

While you eat, reflect on some or all of the following prompts:

We wash our hands all the time, many times without thinking about what we are doing. What was it like to slow down and wash prayerfully and intentionally?

How is handwashing an act of service, especially right now?

Preparation is an act of love for ourselves and others. How did you experience God's love as you prepared for this meal?

Sometimes preparation is a luxury. How is taking time to prepare for a meal different from eating on the run? Give thanks to God for nourishing our souls in every circumstance.

Reflect back to past meals and moments around the table. What meals have been memorable? What gatherings made you feel welcomed? Have you ever had a memorable Communion experience? What made it memorable?

Jesus gives thanks for the bread before breaking it. What things do you give thanks for in your life?

Food is a common love language. Think back to a time when someone offered or prepared food for you as a sign of love. Do you think that Jesus was trying to express his love for his disciples in this last meal? How does that layer add to the story?

Sending

When you are finished eating, sing the Doxology as an act of praise to the one who provided this meal.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above ye heavenly hosts.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBBnOJpclMQ>

Jesus knew the days ahead would be hard and gives his disciples a word of encouragement and challenge. As we continue our Holy Week and quarantine journey, we too, may have tough days ahead. Read these words from John 13 as a word of challenge and blessing:

"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 13:34-35