

Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-14

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 "This month will be the first month; it will be the first month of the year for you.[a] 3 Tell the whole Israelite community: On the tenth day of this month they must take a lamb for each household, a lamb per house. 4 If a household is too small for a lamb, it should share one with a neighbor nearby. You should divide the lamb in proportion to the number of people who will be eating it. 5 Your lamb should be a flawless year-old male. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 You should keep close watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month. At twilight on that day, the whole assembled Israelite community should slaughter their lambs. 7 They should take some of the blood and smear it on the two doorposts and on the beam over the door of the houses in which they are eating. 8 That same night they should eat the meat roasted over the fire. They should eat it along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9 Don't eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over fire with its head, legs, and internal organs. 10 Don't let any of it remain until morning, and burn any of it left over in the morning. 11 This is how you should eat it. You should be dressed, with your sandals on your feet and your walking stick in your hand. You should eat the meal in a hurry. It is the Passover of the Lord. 12 I'll pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I'll strike down every oldest child in the land of Egypt, both humans and animals. I'll impose judgments on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. 13 The blood will be your sign on the houses where you live. Whenever I see the blood, I'll pass over[b] you. No plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. 14 "This day will be a day of remembering for you. You will observe it as a festival to the Lord. You will observe it in every generation as a regulation for all time.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

23 I received a tradition from the Lord, which I also handed on to you: on the night on which he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread. 24 After giving thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this to remember me." 25 He did the same thing with the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do this to remember me." 26 Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you broadcast the death of the Lord until he comes.

John 13

13 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. 2 Jesus and his disciples were sharing the evening meal. The devil had already provoked Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. 4 So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. 6 When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You don't understand what I'm doing now, but you will understand later."

8 "No!" Peter said. "You will never wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't have a place with me."

9 Simon Peter said, "Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!"

10 Jesus responded, "Those who have bathed need only to have their feet washed, because they are completely clean. You disciples are clean, but not every one of you."

11 He knew who would betray him. That's why he said, "Not every one of you is clean."

12 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? 13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you speak correctly, because I am. 14 If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. 15 I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do. 16 I assure you, servants aren't greater than their master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them. 17 Since you know these things, you will be happy if you do them.

31 When Judas was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Human One[a] has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32 If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify the Human One[b] in himself and will glorify him immediately. 33 Little children, I'm with you for a little while longer. You will look for me—but, just as I told the Jewish leaders, I also tell you now—'Where I'm going, you can't come.' 34 "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. 35 This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

Sermon

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit: Amen.

This month will be the first month. This day will be a day of remembering for you. This is how God spoke to the Israelites of the Passover, that their sins would not be counted against them, that they'd be delivered from slavery into freedom, that today would be the first day of the rest of their lives. It's no mistake that, on the last night with his disciples, Jesus recalled this language and said, twice over, "Do this" – eat this bread and drink this cup – "to remember me." Today is the first day of the rest of the world.

What's the importance of remembering at this point? So often in Holy Week, we focus on the events yet to come on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. Rather than remember, we anticipate. Perhaps that's the American protestant work ethic in us, trying to get the right things

done in the right order. Perhaps it's our desire to get through the tragedy of the cross and bask in the resurrection.

Whatever the reason may be, we don't often begin with remembering. Remembrance isn't our natural posture.

But here, on a night unlike any other night, we must learn to remember, for we can't know the fullness of what the cross means without remembering the life of the one who hangs upon the cross. We can't know the tragic absence of life when he descends into hell if we don't remember what it was like to live life beside Jesus, with God dwelling in our midst.

But have you ever tried to remember something in a confusing, emotional time? It's hard. It's like trying to remember exactly what you want to say to someone in a meeting, but you haven't brought notes. So, the meeting gets intense, things get a bit anxious, and as soon as you leave, things start to pop up that you wish you had said or

discussed. Remembering can be hard in times of heightened anxiety. Imagine, then, how much more difficult it might be to remember in this moment, as Jesus is speaking of his own impending death.

Fortunately for us, tonight Jesus helps us to remember. The Lord knows that we're imperfect, distractible beings that follow the first shiny things that catch the sunlight or the squirrels that zoom through our paths, just as the disciples were on that first Maundy Thursday thousands of years ago. And so Jesus, in just the few actions of this night, sums up his entire life, giving signs and symbols to help us remember who this Lord is who will all too soon die at our own hands.

First, God gathers us together here in this upper room. That may seem mundane or simple or just a functional part of a gathering, but in our culture, this is no small feat. In the midst of a divisive election season, Jesus gathers us together. In this rabidly individualistic culture, Jesus makes us

a community. Nor was it simple to make these disciples come together. Fishermen like James and John and Peter and Andrew were all crushingly overtaxed by the likes of Matthew, who now sits beside them. Since some were disciples of John, they were likely zealots seeking a political revolution against Rome rather than a nonviolent road to peace. The first thing that Jesus does is gather us together.

Then Jesus washes the disciples' feet. Throughout his life, Jesus constantly lowered himself to the status of a servant to cleanse us from the grime of our journeys. That includes sin, illness, sadness, anger, fear, and even the dust on our feet. Each of these moves, from the woman at the well to the father with a demon-possessed child to Zacchaeus, to Blind Bartameus to the woman caught in adultery and every other place Jesus lowered himself to clean us up, each was a cleansing meant to make us ready for new life. This grimy, messy job is something that Jesus had

been doing in different ways throughout his life, and so on this night, the footwashing reminds us of all the ways that Jesus cleans us up and prepares us for new life.

After gathering us and cleaning us, then Jesus feeds us. Throughout his ministry, Jesus provided for our most basic needs. He fed thousands of disciples in need. He gave Peter's faith a boost to follow on the water and held Peter up when his faith gave way to the waves. And now, tonight, he gives us not just our daily bread, but the bread of heaven. He gives us not just the fruit of the vine, but the blood that is wine.

Tonight, we gather to remember this Jesus, and the last things that he did before he took on the cross, the cross that we called for him to take. What we might not remember is that Maundy means command. We're commanded to wash feet as our Lord washed feet. We're commanded to share in communion with one another as our Lord shared

food, fellowship, and life abundant with us. We're commanded to remember what Christ has done for us tonight. This is one of those places where a command can be grace. To remember this Jesus is to remember how grace lived, not just on this night, but throughout his earthly ministry. Our Maundy tonight, our command, is to remember this Jesus. Let us remember what God has done for us on every step of the way – from Bethlehem to Gethsemane to Golgotha – that led us to gather together this night. Amen.