

MAUNDY THURSDAY Worship, 9th April, 2020.

[Note – this evening’s worship is based on a story-telling style, inviting us into the events of the night before Jesus’ death... If you have a candle you may like to light it, & set it beside you...]

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER :

Loving Creator God, as we have moved through this Holy Week we’ve been reminded that just like the early disciples, we often fail to see who you are in our lives. And like them, there are times when we struggle to acknowledge you, or your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grant us your pardon, and your grace. Give us the ability to see you as the God you *are*, rather than the God we would *like you to be*.

May we open our hearts to you, and live out your love in our lives. With grateful and expectant hearts we pray. Amen.

THE STORY BEGINS :

Tonight, too much happens in the holy story to comprehend.

Too much fear and deceit, too much confusion, too few words and too little space.

As the darkness encroaches and light fades, the Holy One of God moves.

The basin is filled; bread breaks and wine is spilled. Sacred silence; holy moments...

A question, a broken promise; a wondering band of followers and a worried Messiah.

Let’s wait here long enough to glimpse and even hold, a fraction of a broken heaven.

SONG : TIS. 256 “From heaven you came.”

*From heaven you came, helpless babe, entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served, but to serve, and give your life that we might live.*

*This is our God, the Servant King, he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the Servant King.*

The foot-washing : [John 13 : 1–15, 34 & 35.]

PRAYER :

Servant God, kneeling, bending, serving us –

take our dusty journeys – every path we have trodden in life; every word that has brought hurt; every action that has led us into difficult places.

Wash away the pain, as we confess and you forgive.

Take the wounds of our travelling – every burden we carry that weighs us down;
every place we've visited that holds too much pain.
Wash away the burdens, as we let go and let you heal.

Take our tarnished values – every lesson about love we have not learned; every truth of
your kingdom we have not grasped.
Wash away the reluctance, as we offer our love, and accept your love & forgiveness.
Amen.

Jesus says: *“Come to me, you who are weary and heavy-laden.
Come and let my hands refresh you.
Let me be your servant; experience the forgiveness that love offers.”*

SONG : TIS 640 “Kneels at the feet of his friends.”

*Kneels at the feet of his friends, silently washes their feet;
Master who acts as a slave to them.*

*Yesu, Yesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.*

[The story continues...]

Footsteps echoed, running through the streets towards Caiaphas's home.
Soldiers' sandals were heard, as they marched through alleyways out of the city in
tens, as usual. But no-one paid attention as they shared the Passover feast.

The Supper : [Matthew 26 : 20 – 29.]

At one table, in an upper room, a holy man and his followers faced each other. A
betrayal was accused. Soon he would leave, as questions flew.
He would walk the dark streets towards a secret meeting place, among the trees
& shadows. But not yet.

Round the table the voices fell silent, as Jesus took unleavened bread, gave thanks, &
broke it.

He said : “This is my body; take it & eat it, all of you.”
His followers glanced at each other, puzzled.

Jesus took the cup of wine that the Passover meal requires, & said:
“This is my blood, the sign of the new covenant. Drink from it, all of you.”

Outside, the high priest's door slammed shut. Footsteps went scurrying.

The world was turning against them, but only one person in that room could hear it.

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The room is now silent, suspended in time. The table is left – broken bread still sitting there, wine half finished, herbs & lamb scattered across the table; cushions scattered, crumbs on the floor, a basin and towel left.

Shadows stretch across the table; a breeze from the empty window flutters the tablecloth. The room is cold, full of accusations and questions.
In the distance, footsteps move into an olive grove.

SONG : “Stay with me.”

Stay with me, remain here with me, Watching and praying, watching and praying.

In the Garden : *[Matthew 26 : 36 – 56.]*

There is a rustle of leaves among the olive trees, a brushing of garments caught on branches, and the sound of twigs breaking as the men kneel.

Footsteps are heard on the way out of the city. There is a gathering of noise, SHOUTS, then silence. The trees capture the sounds.

Suddenly, the wind changes direction. A kiss is placed on a carpenter’s cheek.
It is the moment of betrayal. The night has truly arrived.

PRAYER :

God, in anguish we hold you, and walk with you – through, on, and into the darkness....

God, hold us as we walk too – through, on and into this world’s darkness....

God of passion, we kneel with you as you pray into the night, while the world conspires against you and tries to put an end to love....

God, kneel with us as we pray too, into this night, as forces still try to betray love’s future....

God of the day and night, we follow you, holding your cup of suffering, trusting your will, though the shadows seem so long....

God who lives through us, please stay with us. Help us to hold your cup and keep trusting, through the deep night.... Amen.

Extinguish your candle....Silence for reflection.....