

Maundy Thursday, April 1, 2021
Living Faith Lutheran Church: Virtual Church

GATHERING

Friends in Christ, in this Lenten season we have heard our Lord's call to struggle against sin, death, and the devil—all that keeps us from loving God and each other. This is the struggle to which we were called at baptism.

Within the community of the church, God never wearies of forgiving sin and giving the peace of reconciliation. On this night let us confess our sin against God and our neighbour, and enter the celebration of the great Three Days reconciled with God and with one another.

Order for Confession and Forgiveness

Most merciful God, we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.
We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.
Forgive us, renew us, and lead us
so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace we have been saved.
We therefore proclaim with joy the entire forgiveness of all our sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Gathering Song “Great God, Your Love Has Called Us” verses 1-3

1. Great God, your love has called us here, as we, by love for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear, though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind your call to hear, your love to find.
2. We come with self-inflicted pains of broken trust and chosen wrong,
half-free, half-bound by inner chains, by social forces swept along,
by pow'rs and systems close confined, yet seeking hope for humankind.
3. Great God, in Christ, you call our name and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right, or claim, but by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat and find you kneeling at our feet.

Greeting

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Prayer of the Day

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 Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WORD

Exodus 12:1-14 *(Remember that this time of the year is also Passover for our Jewish relatives including Jesus, who, as a good Jew, celebrated this festival on this night)*

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.

Word of God. Word of Life. Thanks be to God.

The Holy Gospel John 13:1-17, 31b-35 *“Glory to you, O Lord”*

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."

³¹When he (*Judas*) had gone out, Jesus said, "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.'

I 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."

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sequence Hymn "Great God, Your Love has Called Us, vv. 4-5

4. Then, take the towel, and break the bread, and humble us, and call us friends.
Suffer and serve till all are fed, and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings, to fill all worlds, to crown all things.
5. Great God, in Christ, you set us free your life to live, your joy to share.
Give us your Spirit's liberty to turn from guilt and dull despair,
and offer all that faith can do while love is making all things new.

A Maundy Thursday Meditation on the Holy Supper

*I wish to give credit to Frederick Buechner for both the concept and some of the striking images and language in this reflection. Although John's Gospel does not include the institution of the Lord's Supper, it is a central element in the passion stories told by Matthew, Mark and Luke. As well, our Sunday liturgy invokes the place (the Upper Room) and the time ("on the night he was betrayed. . .") in the Prayer of Thanksgiving over the gifts of bread and wine. In that way, we are **taken back** to the Upper Room to be with the disciples; similarly, our Lord is **brought forward** into our time and place. Thus, with both understandings, we are sharing his living presence by sharing in his "last supper". Even though we will not be celebrating the meal this night at our "virtual" service, the gifts of forgiveness and new life offered brings the comfort, peace and hope provided by the one who is both host and food.*

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On his final evening with them, they gather together for the last time
in a second floor room somewhere in the city.

Two things happen there: The first is that he takes a pitcher and a bowl,

ties a towel around his waist and goes from one to another on his knees
and washes their feet.

Confused, wondering, nervous, some of them tense at his touch
while others feel like weeping at his words:

“I am setting an example for you so that you will do for one another
what I have done for you. Love one another as I have loved you.”

Perhaps in some small way, his call to humility and service and love breaks through
all the noise and hubbub left over from the triumphant procession just a few days before.

And one day they will remember what he has done for them and to them.

They will remember how he said that if one wishes to be great in the kingdom,
then she or he must be prepared to become a servant.

Because, after all, slaves are not greater than their masters
and if the Lord is called to suffer and die,
then his followers should expect to be asked to do the same.

After the foot-washing, the meal resumes, quieter and more subdued now,
although the sounds that rough men make while eating
can still be heard above the whispers and conversations.

One of the men wipes the back of his hand
across his bearded mouth while he stares at his master.
Another uses his fingers to find his food and feed himself,
never once taking his eyes off the face that is still and quiet—
the way that air grows still and quiet just before a storm.

As was the custom at Passover, Jesus, being the host of the meal,
gets up to bless the bread and wine, gives thanks for it,
and, as was the ancient custom, takes the loaf up into his hands
and breaks it for them.

But then comes the unaccustomed thing.
He gives the loaf a name: his body. He gives the wine a name: his blood.

And then he tells them to eat and drink his body and his blood—
although by now they have no appetite left with their stomachs in knots
and their mouths spit-dry in fear, with a sense of impending doom.
He tells them in words and actions to take his life into themselves
and to live their lives for him.

Ever since that evening, in different rooms and different cities,
in cathedrals or chapels or houses. . .at odd times of day or night. . .
in secret or in the open. . .legally or illegally. . .

under penalty of death or in freedom of action—
ever since that night, the bread has been broken
and the wine poured out in remembrance of his death—
as the way to proclaim the victory won by his death.

And to those many different meals, many different people come.
Maybe not so many as before, but always some. . .always enough.
And why do they come? Why do we come?

Probably it is for the same reason that God's people have always come
century after century after century—
because, although there is much that we cannot understand about him
and maybe even much we find hard to believe about him—
nevertheless, we come because his life, given to us in bread and wine—
his life shines out of this meal and draws us to it just as surely
as a glimmer of light draws someone who has lost their way in the dark.

We come because in eating this bread, we find that we are hungry for more than bread;
that in drinking this wine, we are thirsty for more than wine—
that we are really hungry and thirsty for him.

And by coming to meet him at the table and to share in his life in this meal,
we find that we need him more and more,
that we desire and long for him more and more,
and that only in him and by him can the emptiness of our spirits be filled.

So, perhaps, in that simple and yet profound need,
you and I find our reason for coming—
because we want him and need him to give our lives purpose,
to give our lives meaning, to give our lives their life.

Amen.

SDG

Silence for reflection

A Prayer (sung or spoken) in response to the meditation #466 "In the Singing"

In the Singing



1 In the sing - ing, in the si - lence, in the hands ex - pect - ant, o - pen,
2 In the ques - tion, in the an - swer, in the mo - ment of ac - cept - ance,



in the bless - ing, in the break - ing, in your pres - ence at this ta - ble,
in the heart's cry, in the heal - ing, in the cir - cle of your peo - ple,



Je - sus Christ, Je - sus Christ, be the wine of grace;



Je - sus Christ, Je - sus Christ, be the bread of peace.

Text: Shirley Erena Murray, b. 1931

Music: BREAD OF PEACE, Carlton R. Young, b. 1926

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Prayers of the Faithful

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *Silence for a time*

God of love, unite your church in its commitment to humble service. Make us your faithful disciples. Speak words of truth and grace through us. Encourage us in self-giving acts of kindness. Let us love one another as you have loved us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, tend to flocks, fields, and vineyards. Bring favourable weather for crops to grow. Guide the hands of those who cultivate, farm, and garden. Let the earth flourish so that all may eat and be satisfied. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, you give us a new commandment, to have love for one another. We give thanks for organizations that respond to disasters and for agencies that offer relief and humanitarian aid to populations in need. Particularly do we pray for the whole world dealing with a virus, with fear,

with major changes and losses, with the feeling that illness, death and grief are all around. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, give ear to all who call upon you for any need of body or spirit (*especially those known to us and loved by us whom we name now in silence or aloud*). Provide for those who do not have enough to eat, those who are unemployed or underemployed, those who rely on the generosity of others and those who care for others at the risk of their own lives. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, you invite us again and again to your table of mercy. Heal all divisions between members of this and every assembly. Extend the hospitality of our tables, whether in this place or in our homes, beyond the walls around us, so that your love and welcome will be shown and known to all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, glorify your servants who walked by faith in this life and who now feast with you. Inspire us by the sacrifice of those who were imprisoned, persecuted, or martyred for their faith whether in times past or present. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Sharing of the Peace (*however and wherever that is able to be done, even by phone or email over the remaining days of this holiest of all weeks.*)

The peace of Christ be with us all.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

A Prayer for Renewers of Society

Holy and righteous God, you created us in your image. Grant us grace to contend fearlessly against evil and to make no peace with oppression. Help us to work for justice among people and nations, to the glory of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Brother and Lover. Amen.

A Prayer for Martyrs

Gracious God, in every age you have sent women and men who have given their lives in witness to your love and truth. Inspire us with their memories of those whose faithfulness led to the way of the cross. Give us the courage to bear full witness with our lives to your Son's victory over sin and death, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

A Prayer for Trust in Times of Conflict, Crisis or Disaster

O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

SENDING

Sending Song “Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery”

1. Tree of Life and awesome mystery, in your death we are reborn;
 though you die in all of history, still you rise with every morn,
 still you rise with every morn.
2. We remember truth once spoken, love passed on through act and word;
 every person lost and broken wears the body of our Lord,
 wears the body of our Lord.
3. Christ, you lead and we shall follow, stumbling though our steps may be;
 one with you in joy and sorrow, we the river, you the sea,
 we the river, you the sea.
4. God of all our fear and sorrow, God who lives beyond our death,
 hold us close through each tomorrow, love as near as every breath,
 love as near as every breath.

Benediction

May Almighty God, who is a strong tower to all,
to whom all things in heaven and on earth bow and obey,
be now and evermore our sure defence, and help us to know
that the name given to us for health and salvation, for comfort and hope
is the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

And now, as Luther recommended, “Let us go to sleep quickly and cheerfully.”