

MAUNDY THURSDAY: AN AT-HOME SERVICE

As we prepare for Holy Week, let's resist the temptation to try to make it normal. It's not. Nothing about this Holy Week is normal. But then again, that's what Holy Week is: it's an abnormal story, a very empty story, a lonely story.

It's a story of presence wrapped up inside of absence. At the center of tonight's story is a meal. A table set, bodies washed and ready, a feast shared, and then the table is stripped. Emptied. Laid bare.

In that barrenness, we recognize our own growing loneliness, our overwhelming separation, our own inhospitality—toward God, toward one another, toward ourselves—as we strip it all down.

What You Will Need:

1. A copy of this service, either on a device or printed, for each person participating
2. A candle and a lighter
3. A Bible
4. A cross to place at the center of the table
5. Bread and a dinner meal to share with those in your home
6. Optional: A computer or device to play a YouTube video

The first Christians worshiped using a few simple elements, which helped them understand the meaning of Christ's redeeming work:

1. *Confession of our sins and repentance (turning towards God)*
2. *The Word of God/Scripture (listening to God)*
3. *Foot washing/hand washing (being forgiven by God)*
4. *A "Love Feast" (being cared for by God)*
5. *The stripping of the church (waiting for Good Friday)*

PART 1: SETTING THE TABLE

As you set the table, also place a Bible, a cross, and a candle at the center. Choose one person at the table to read the Scripture reading. Choose one person to lead the call and response prayers. In this service, the leader prays the words in plain text, and everyone responds with the words in bold.

Can you or your family join with others using the gifts of technology? If you are home alone, maybe you can plan to call a friend over video call or the phone.

Pastor Christina will be sharing this service starting at 6:30 pm over Zoom video call for anyone who wants someone to share their table with. You can dial in here:

Either way, don't feel that you have to go it alone.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE

Light the candle. This is a symbol of the light of Christ shining amidst the growing darkness of Good Friday.

Leader: Light and peace in Jesus Christ.

All: Thanks be to God!

CONFESSION AND PARDON

Leader: My sisters and brothers,
Christ shows us his love by becoming a humble servant.
Let us draw near to God and confess our sin in the truth of God's Spirit.

**All: Most merciful God,
We, your Church, confess
that often our spirit has not been that of Christ.
Where we have failed to love one another as he loves us,
Where we have pledged loyalty to him with our lips
and then betrayed, deserted, or denied him,
forgive us, we pray;**

**and by your Spirit make us faithful in every time of trial;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Leader: Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ.
But Christ suffered and died for us,
was raised from the dead and ascended on high for us,
and continues to intercede for us.

Believe the good news:

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

All: Glory to God. Amen.

SONG (READ OR SING)

Charles Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, wrote this hymn. It is sung to the tune of "This Is My Father's World." You can read it in unison or sing together if you know the tune.

**All: Father of earth and heaven,
Thy hungry children feed,
Thy grace be to our spirits given,
That true immortal bread.**

**Grant us and all our race
In Jesus Christ to prove
The sweetness of thy pardoning grace,
The manna of thy love.**

SCRIPTURE READING

One person should read aloud John 13:1-17, 31-35:

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. The devil had already provoked Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew the Father

had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. 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."

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

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

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

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

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.

When Judas was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Human One has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify the Human One in himself and will glorify him immediately. 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.'

"I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

BLESSING THE MEAL

This is a traditional dinner blessing. It is sung to the tune of the Doxology that we sing on Sunday mornings. You can sing together, have one person sing, or read it in unison.

**Be present at our table, Lord:
Be here and everywhere adored;
Thy creatures bless and grant that we
May feast in paradise with Thee.**

WASHING OUR HANDS

In this time when hand washing has taken on new importance, we wash our hands to be ready to share this meal. As you wash, say the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer takes about 20 seconds to recite (the recommended length of time for effective hand washing).

PART 2: SHARING THE MEAL

PASSING THE BREAD

Pass your bread around to every person of your table.

*As you share bread, ask each person: Where have you seen God's love today?
Or: How is God asking you to love today?*

FEASTING TOGETHER

*As you eat your dinner, reflect on the Scripture reading with these questions:
When was a time you chose love this week?*

*When was a time you found it difficult to love this week?
When was a time you felt loved by someone this week?*

PRAYER AFTER THE MEAL

After you finish your meal, pray in unison.

**All: For these, and all of your mercies, God,
may your holy name be blessed and praised;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

A benediction is a "good word," a word of blessing. Say this blessing together in unison.

All: May Jesus Christ, who for our sake became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you this night and forever. Amen.

Disconnect with any friends or family outside of your home after you share in this blessing, as you prepare to strip the table and end the evening in silence.

PART 3: STRIPPING THE TABLE

On Maundy Thursday, we end with "stripping the church" of different things that make our church beautiful. This is a symbol of the grief and sadness of Good Friday.

After you have disconnected from anyone outside your home, clear the table and clean up the meal. Wash the dishes by hand, dry them, and put them away. Package up any leftovers and put away any condiments, salt, and pepper. Empty your table of everything except the cross and the candle.

If you can, take a few things down from your walls. Take down some pictures, leaving the empty nails. Remove enough things that your home feels a bit more bare and stark for Good Friday.

Return to the table together. Pray in silence for a few minutes.

Or you may choose to listen to the song "Stay with Me" from the Taize Community, a simple, repetitive prayer song:

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

Sit with Silence

Sit for a few minutes at the empty table in silence, with the candle lit. As you leave the table, blow the candle out.