**ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**WOODLAND, MI**



**Maundy Thursday**

**April 8, 2020**

**CELEBRATING MAUNDY THURSDAY AT HOME**

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR MEAL**

* Light a candle so everyone knows this isn’t just any family meal. Something special and holy is about to happen.

**Read aloud:**

Did you know Jesus’ last night with his friends was spent in a place called the Upper Room? That’s where they gathered around a table for their meal. They thought it was going to be a meal just like so many other meals they had shared with Jesus, but this one turned out to be unlike any meal they had ever known.

You may have seen pictures of the Last Supper where Jesus and the disciples are sitting in chairs, the way we do it. But actually,they reclined on cushions at a table on the floor. It was a “laid back” occasion.

There were two really important things that happened at this meal. It was the first time Jesus took the bread and wine, blessed them, and said, “This is my body” and “This is my blood.” Every time we celebrate communion, we’re remembering this night when Jesus shared himself with his disciples around the table. He’s promised that he continues to come to us, even today, in the bread and wine.

Christians celebrate Holy Communion when the community is together. The meal isn’t just about the bread and wine; it’s about receiving this gift from one another and with one another. During our love-distancing these days (a friend has renamed social-distancing love-distancing, and I really like that), we’re fasting from Holy Communion, and look forward to the day when we’ll all gather again to receive our living Lord who gives himself to us in this amazing way.

But before Jesus even got to the part where he gave his disciples Holy Communion for the first time, he did something to show them how much he loved them. He knelt before them and washed their feet. This was his way of showing them that, like him, they need to love and serve one another in humility. He gave them a new commandment, that they love one another as he loved them. In fact, the word *Maundy* means *commandment*.

Before you begin your meal together, read John 13:3-17, 34-35. You can read it from your Bible, or here:

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." 8Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." 11For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13You call me Teacher and Lord — and you are right, for that is what I am. 14So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. 34I 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."

* If you’re adventurous (and I hope you are), and you have someone else living with you, pour some water in a basin, get out some towels and wash one another’s feet. Be careful, though. This experience might transform you!

*Before you start eating, here’s a table prayer you might use:*

*Lord, Jesus, on this holy night you washed the feet of your friends, and you shared your last meal with them. Bless this meal that we share tonight. Help us to remember that whenever we eat, you are here at the table with us, teaching us to love one another the way you have loved us. Amen.*

**Enjoy your meal!**

* As you eat together, think about some of the special meals that you have shared with the people you love. What made them memorable? How is this like or different than Holy Communion? What do you miss about taking Holy Communion in this time when we are not receiving it?

**AFTER EATING**

**Read aloud:**

When we come together to worship in our church building on Maundy Thursday, we end our time together with the stripping of the altar. As we hear a Psalm sung or said, all the sacred ornaments are removed: candles, bible, altar book, communion ware, linens and paraments. When it is finished, the altar is completely bare. It reminds us of the bareness of life without the hope of Christ that we have through his resurrection.

To remember this tradition, read Psalm 22. You get the gist of it from verses 1-5, but if you’re up for the full experience, read the whole thing. I hope you’ll notice how this Psalm foreshadows the death of Jesus on the cross and leads us into the sorrow of Good Friday. You can read it from your Bible or right here:

1My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
 Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?  
 2O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
 and by night, but find no rest.  
 3Yet you are holy,  
 enthroned on the praises of Israel.  
 4In you our ancestors trusted;  
 they trusted, and you delivered them.  
 5To you they cried, and were saved;  
 in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.  
 6But I am a worm, and not human;  
 scorned by others, and despised by the people.  
 7All who see me mock at me;  
 they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;  
 8"Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver —  
 let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"  
 9Yet it was you who took me from the womb;  
 you kept me safe on my mother's breast.  
 10On you I was cast from my birth,  
 and since my mother bore me you have been my God.  
 11Do not be far from me,  
 for trouble is near  
 and there is no one to help.  
 12Many bulls encircle me,  
 strong bulls of Bashan surround me;  
 13they open wide their mouths at me,  
 like a ravening and roaring lion.  
 14I am poured out like water,  
 and all my bones are out of joint;  
 my heart is like wax;  
 it is melted within my breast;  
 15my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
 and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
 you lay me in the dust of death.  
 16For dogs are all around me;  
 a company of evildoers encircles me.  
 My hands and feet have shriveled;  
 17I can count all my bones.  
 They stare and gloat over me;  
 18they divide my clothes among themselves,  
 and for my clothing they cast lots.  
 19But you, O LORD, do not be far away!  
 O my help, come quickly to my aid!  
 20Deliver my soul from the sword,  
 my life from the power of the dog!  
 21Save me from the mouth of the lion!  
 From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.  
 22I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters  
 in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:  
 23You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
 All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;  
 stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!  
 24For he did not despise or abhor  
 the affliction of the afflicted;  
 he did not hide his face from me,  
 but heard when I cried to him.  
 25From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
 my vows I will pay before those who fear him.  
 26The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
 those who seek him shall praise the LORD.  
 May your hearts live forever!  
 27All the ends of the earth shall remember  
 and turn to the LORD;  
 and all the families of the nations  
 shall worship before him.  
 28For dominion belongs to the LORD,  
 and he rules over the nations.  
 29To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;  
 before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
 and I shall live for him.  
 30Posterity will serve him;  
 future generations will be told about the LORD,  
 31and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
 saying that he has done it.

* You can do a “stripping of the altar” in your own home.
* Gather any faith related items you may have in your house -- icons, statues, religious art and symbols that can be easily removed. Pack them away somewhere, in a storage bin or a bag. (You might also cover any large items with a cloth.)
* Remove all items from your dining table so it’s completely empty and thoroughly wash it so it is both cleared and cleaned.
* Leave your table bare until Easter morning.

*Parents: on Saturday night when everyone has gone to bed, unpack and uncover the religious items and decorate your dining room table with Easter joy so your family can awaken to a day of celebration!*

God’s blessings to all of you as you discover new ways of worshiping God through these days of distancing. Even where two or three are not gathered together, I can assure you that Jesus is in the midst of us!

Pastor Nancy Kraft

Ascension Lutheran Church

Towson MD