

Maundy Thursday

Welcome to this time of Worship

Let's take a moment to prepare our hearts and minds to worship God

(Spend a few moments in silence to focus your thoughts on God)

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ,

We cannot escape the irony of our situation:
we are prevented from gathering in fellowship
to remember the supper which you shared
gathered at the table with your friends.

We may not be together in body, but we are one in spirit
and we know you are here with each of us.

Holy Lord,

you are what draws us together,
you are what unites us,
you are the love which we share.

We do not always display your love:
we act unkindly towards one another,
with a selfishness we did not learn from you.

In this time of Holy Week

when we remember your suffering and death
teach us to be more caring, more forgiving,
more charitable towards others;
remove from our hearts every notion
that would deny or betray you,
forgive us our faults and fill us with your grace.

Jesus, our Master and Friend,

tonight, we remember your love for us;
teach us to love one another.

Though we are of necessity apart

bind us together in your holy name

as we pray to your Father and ours in the words you gave us:

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen

John 13:1-17 NIV

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

²The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

⁸"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

¹⁰Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

¹¹For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them.

¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now

that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

A Thought for Maundy Thursday 2020

After Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he sat down to eat with them. There is something very special about sitting down to eat with friends. We all require the sustenance we gain from food for our physical health, but equally important for our mental health is the sustenance we gain from being in fellowship with other people. We often hear folk say, "Och, it's not worth cooking for one!", but the thought of a cosy dinner for two is heart-warming. Family gatherings for Christmas Dinner or for a summer barbeque are, for many families, occasions to be cherished. In our Church Family at St Stephen's we look forward to Coffee Mornings, Burns' Night Suppers, Christian Aid Soup Lunches and, of course, those wonderful pot-luck supper events that we call our Beta Evenings. It is always good to come together in fellowship and to find nurture and nourishment for our bodies, minds, and, of course, our souls.

Every time we celebrate Holy Communion is special, after all we are following Jesus' command to remember Him. Maundy Thursday Communion is a very special and poignant occasion because it was on Maundy Thursday itself that Jesus gave this command to His disciples at The Last Supper.

"On the night before He died Jesus took bread . . .", we hear these words every time we share in the Sacrament.

Tonight, is the first time in over 20 years that St Stephen's Church have not met in fellowship together with our extended family and friends to share in Maundy Thursday Beta Supper and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. This would be difficult whatever the reason, but in this time of uncertainty and fear brought about by the Coronavirus Pandemic, we would all dearly love to come together to find comfort in one another – and yet, that is the worst thing that we could do. Our very presence together in one room would be a betrayal of the love and friendship that exist between us.

Tonight is the night when we recall Jesus' command to remember Him, the night when He ate with friends, the night on which he was betrayed! Whatever entered Judas Iscariot's heart that night was just as deadly as any disease. Whatever possessed him and drove him into the court of the Jewish authorities,

into the thrall of the Roman Empire, brought fear and uncertainty, death and mourning into the lives of Christ's followers and friends – so much so that Judas Iscariot himself was destroyed by its evil.

The pain and suffering, the death and destruction that was set free that night was earth shattering. And yet it was from this broken world, from this utter devastation that the Resurrection followed. Out of this grotesque situation came good and earth changing events. God, in Jesus Christ rescued the people – and through Jesus we have eternal life.

The days that lie ahead for us may be uncertain but already we are hearing stories of good and potentially earth changing events. People are involved in acts of kindness towards their neighbours, and communities are being built up in ways we have not seen before. Countries that were traditionally enemies have reached out to one another with assistance.

Churches may have closed their buildings but they have thrown open their hearts to offer support and fellowship where it is needed, and to find new ways of taking worship into peoples' homes.

This Easter we may witness a renewal of faith that we have not known for a very long time and in a manner which none of us could have foreseen.

There are tough times ahead – Good Friday is still to come – but the promise of Resurrection to a new life in Christ remains ours.

Let us Pray.

Father and Mother God,
Creator and Sustainer of all that is,
giver of life and hope,
we praise you for we are your children, made in your image,

Lord Jesus Christ,
you came into the world to teach us what love is like,
to teach us what God is like, for God is Love.
Tonight, we remember the extent of that love.

Lord Jesus, you took on our life and our death
you are a God who suffered for us
a God who suffers with us;
a God who does not keep your distance
but walks alongside us in joy and in pain.

You are the Light of the World;
you broke through the darkness to free us all from sin.
You are the Bread of Life;
you, who feeds us and makes us whole.
Unite us as your people.
In you we are one;
regardless of our differences
we share One faith in you
Our Saviour and Our Lord.
In these days of uncertainty may we know your presence with us
as we witness to your life, death and resurrection
and we pray your Kingdom comes.
Holy Spirit,
Our Advocate and Friend,
you were sent to guide us
and empower us to witness to the Gospel.
In these days of uncertainty help us to be sure of our purpose.
Lead us to where people long for something more,
to places where God's children are now ready to receive you,
no longer denying or betraying Christ's love,
even after decades of turning their faces away.

May we be servants to one another
just as Jesus was to his disciples when washing their feet.
Holy God, Parent, Son and Holy Spirit,
on this Maundy Thursday assure us once more of your unfailing love
and may we walk with you into Easter and beyond. Amen

Hymn 376 You may wish to sing or to read the words aloud
(Tune: Rockingham- When I Survey the Wondrous Cross)

'Twas on that night when doomed to know the eager rage of every foe,
the night in which he was betrayed, the Saviour of the world took bread.

And, after thanks and glory given to him that rules in earth and heaven,
that symbol of his flesh he broke, and thus to all his followers spoke:

"My broken body thus I give for you, for all; take eat and live:
and oft the sacred rite renew that brings my wondrous love to view."

Then in his hands the cup he raised, and God anew he thanked and praised,
while kindness in his bosom glowed, and from his lips salvation flowed.

“My blood I thus pour forth,” he cries, “to cleanse the soul in sin that lies;
in this the covenant is sealed, and heaven’s eternal grace revealed.

“With love to all this cup is fraught, let each partake the sacred draught;
through latest ages let it pour in memory of my dying hour.”

Blessing

The peace of Christ, which is beyond all understanding, guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus, and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and for evermore. Amen