

Maundy Thursday Reflection and Meditation

Collect of the Day:

**Read by The Rev. Noreen Suriner
St. Luke's, Lanesborough**

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Psalm 116:1, 10-17:

**Read by Sue Davis
All Saints Church in the Northern Berkshires**

I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication, because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called upon him.

How shall I repay the Lord for all the good things he has done for me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his servants. O Lord, I am your servant; I am your servant and the child of your handmaid; you have freed me from my bonds.

I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call upon the Name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.

The Gospel: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Read by The Rev. Peter Elvin

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. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off the outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then 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. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus 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." For he knew he was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After 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 for you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done for you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify

him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only for 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. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Meditation:

**Read by The Rev. Mary Frances Curns,
All Saints Church in the Northern Berkshires**

In Sam Portaro's Book entitled, *DaySprings- Meditations for Weekdays of Advent, Lent and Easter*, he reminds us that the Gospel attributed to John from where we get this day's reading, was likely the last to be written. "The church was probably fifty to sixty years into its life – which is to say at least one full generation removed from the events that this gospel details.

He points to the church communities as contentious, they had fractured into sub sets centered on a particular teacher or personality. The community of John was no different. There were even subsets of subsets forming within the various church communities. It should then be no surprise that certain themes were of varying importance to different communities.

In John's Gospel, there is found no clear account of a eucharistic meal; there are no words of institution, no blessing of bread or wine, only the business of footwashing. The disciples were gathering for a meal and carrying on conversations and discussions about their day with each other when Jesus begins to do something new. He begins to wash their feet; an act reserved for the slaves, servants or women of their time. The act of Jesus washing feet became the focus for the disciples. This act became an equalizer to them. No was better or more popular... the focus of footwashing became the stabilizer of that group gathered. Because without love's demands, without the community coming together as one, there would be no eucharist.

"It is not easy for us to see ourselves or our church as *servants* of society when we have made a life defining ourselves *as* society. We do not understand ourselves or the church as dependent; we have devoted much energy to our independence and autonomy." It's easier to seek after other things like power, and ways to become more powerful or dredging ourselves into our traditions, or playing the avoidance game by going on a shopping spree.

"Jesus recognized that there could be no eucharist until the disciples all understood what it means to be in loving relationship to one another. Without love, without loving relationships, the eucharist would be only a supper. The only way for Jesus to teach this loving relationship was to get down on his knees and wash their feet. He washed the feet of everyone: from the ones who loved him beyond reason, to the one who would betray him.

Jesus realized that before bread can be broken for the eucharist, the human will to power and privilege must also be broken. Jesus did not urge his disciples to look up to see God, but gathered their sight and attention downward. They witnessed the living God washing their feet and Jesus wanted them to know that they would see God there! "On the floor, in service, was where they would see God. Down there, on the floor, in service is where they would become the church."

"Our place is at the feet of those whom God has entrusted us to serve." Nothing fancy or fashionable but functional and faithful, the everyday, run of the mill, work of plain service to others. "That is when the eucharist begins: not when the bread is broken, but when we are."

Hymn: Ubi Caritas

Litany:

***Read by The Rev. Noreen Suriner
St. Luke's, Lanesborough***

Healer God, we come before you paralyzed:

Paralyzed with fear for what tomorrow may bring;

Paralyzed with the pain of our friends, our loved ones, and ourselves;

Paralyzed by realities that seem to leave no room for hope.

God of action, help us to raise the roof over our heads:

Raise the roof and let light shine through;

Raise the roof and bring us closer to your presence;

Raise the roof and let hope into the rooms of our hearts.

God of love and compassion, we ask your forgiveness for our sins:

Sins of anger and fear;

Sins of hopelessness and despair;

Sins of indifference and denial;

Sins of accusation and judgement;

Sins that overpower hope, and faith, and miracles.

Miraculous God, help us to have faith in miracles:

Miracles that stop the flow of blood, tears, anger, blame, judgement.

Miracles that restore our bodies,

Souls, spirits, relationships, faith.

Miracles that enable us to love

Forgive, act, heal, live.

Healing God, work mightily in our lives today,

Acting, loving, forgiving, making miracles,

That healing and being healed, we may walk again. AMEN.

Prayers during COVID-19 Pandemic

***Read by The Rev. Libby Wade
St. John's Church, Williamstown***

1. For the sick and infected: God, heal and help. Sustain bodies and spirits. Contain the spread of infection.
2. For our vulnerable populations: God, protect our elderly and those suffering from chronic disease. Provide for the poor, especially the uninsured.
3. For the young and the strong: God, give them the necessary caution to keep them from unwittingly spreading this disease. Inspire them to help.
4. For our local, state, and federal governments: God, help our elected officials as they allocate the necessary resources for combatting this pandemic. Help them to provide more tests.
5. For our scientific community, leading the charge to understand the disease and communicate its gravity: God, give them knowledge, wisdom, and a persuasive voice.
6. For the media, committed to providing up-to-date information: God, help them to communicate with appropriate seriousness without causing panic.
7. For consumers of media, looking to be well-informed: God, help us find the most helpful local information to equip us to be good neighbors. Keep us from anxiety and panic, and enable us to implement the recommended strategies, even at a cost to ourselves.
8. For those with mental health challenges who feel isolated, anxious, and helpless: God, provide them every necessary support.
9. For the homeless, unable to practice the protocols of social distancing in the shelter system: Protect them from disease, and provide isolation shelters in every city.
10. For international travelers stuck in foreign countries: God, help them return home safely and quickly.
11. For Christian missionaries throughout the world, especially in areas with high rates of infection: God, provide them with words of hope, and equip them to love and serve those around them.
12. For workers in a variety of industries facing layoffs and financial hardship: God, keep them from panic, and inspire your church to generously support them.

13. For families with young children at home for the foreseeable future: God, help mothers and fathers to partner together creatively for the care and flourishing of their children. For single mothers and fathers, grow their networks of support.
14. For parents who cannot stay home from work but must find care for their children: God, present them with creative solutions.
15. For those in need of regular therapies and treatments that must now be postponed: God, help them to stay patient and positive.
16. For business leaders making difficult decisions that affect the lives of their employees: God, give these women and men wisdom, and help them to lead self-sacrificially.
17. For pastors and church leaders faced with the challenges of social distancing: God, help them to creatively imagine how to pastor their congregants and love their cities well.
18. For college and university students, whose courses of study are changing, whose placements are cancelled, whose graduation is uncertain: God, show them that while life is uncertain, their trust is in you.
19. For Christians in every neighborhood, community, and city: May your Holy Spirit inspire us to pray, to give, to love, to serve, and to proclaim the gospel, that the name of Jesus Christ might be glorified around the world.
20. For frontline health care workers, we thank you for their vocational call to serve us. We also pray:

God, keep them safe and healthy. Keep their families safe and healthy.

God, help them to be knowledgeable about the diagnosis and treatment of this disease, as well as the changing protocols.

God, help them to stay clear-minded in the midst of the surrounding panic.

God, deliver them from anxiety for their own loved ones (aging parents, children, spouses, roommates).

God, give them compassion for every patient in their care.

God, provide for them financially, especially if they fall ill and are unable to work.

God, help Christians in health care to exhibit extraordinary peace, so that many would ask about the reason for their hope. Give them opportunities to proclaim the gospel.

God, we trust that you are good and do good. Teach us to be your faithful people in this time of global crisis. Help us to follow in the footsteps of our faithful shepherd, Jesus, who laid down his life for the sake of love. Glorify his name as you equip us with everything needed for doing your will. Amen.