
Holy Week | *together @ home*

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The Story of Maundy Thursday

Setting the Table

In these unusual days in which we are living, we come together – even though physically separated – to worship God, to hear words of Jesus and to share a meal. Even when 2 or 3 are not gathered in the same physical space, Jesus is here with us.

This year we experience Holy Week while in our own homes. There's something holy & beautiful about staying at home, behind locked doors, just like the disciples were on Easter. We know this story. Do not be afraid.

We invite you to gather at your table for the meal. Whether that meal is for your multigenerational group who are sheltering in place together, or if that meal is for one, we gather to remember together.

Things to have nearby for this time:

- Warm water (a pitcher, a bowl, or a warm wash cloth)
- Some bread
- Your meal
- The altar that you have been using this week.



Set your table to be prepared for company: use the best that is available. Light a candle so you know that this is not just any meal. Something special and holy happens here.

Kinesthetic Call to Worship

Siblings, I invite you to wiggle your toes. Gently roll your ankles, and let the tension go.

And if you do have dust on your feet, shake it off, for here you are clean.

And now, siblings, I invite you to flex your legs. I invite you to touch your knee cap, wiggle, and stretch.

Recollect any times you stood on holy ground, or moments when you stood for one who needed you around.

Now, siblings, I invite you to open your hands. Stretch your fingers wide and close them again.

Notice that there are no holes in your palms, and remember that, ultimately, love has won.

And now, siblings, take a deep breath. For we are in sacred space—here we are kept.

You belong to me, and I belong to you.

So let us prepare our hearts for remembrance and truth.¹

Let's pray:

God, we lay you down, and you rise again. We pack you up, but you don't stay within. We walk away, and you trail our heels.

We lock up our hearts, try to force you to steal.

We put you in our pockets, but you radiate peace. We bury our hearts, but you continue to beat.

We hold our breath, but you make us breathe. We try to sleep, but you find our dreams.

We deny your name, and still you're there. We paid them in silver, and still you care.

We turn our backs, but you don't go anywhere.

We throw stones, and you whisper a prayer.

God, we have pushed you out in every way, again and again, countless times per day.

And you still say our names like lines from a love song, refusing to deny that we belong.

So forgive us, we pray, because tomorrow will be the same.

We will lay you down, and you will rise again. We will pack you up; please don't stay within. Amen.¹

¹ The poetry and prayers in this service are created by Sarah Are, Sanctified Art.

Water

When I was seven years old, my mom taught me to float.
She said, "Close your eyes, take a breath,
I promise you won't choke."
She said, "The water knows you and water won't let go.
It will hold you up, for water is like hope."

I should have known that the final night,
when Jesus had his disciples by his side,
would start with water, because that's where it began.
The river runs through—we're just wading in.

When I hear the words, "He poured water into a basin,"
I imagine the dimly-lit space he was in.
But I also see the woman at the well,
and the water we need to drink for our health.
And my mom wading—wading into the deep,
holding onto me—helping me breathe.

For it all started with water, way back in the beginning;
the deepest and darkest water—life-giving.
Water of the womb, water of the deep;
either way it broke, and life was set free.

The Israelites grew up and so did I,
and we walked through water, though of a different
kind.
For mine was in play—theirs in escape—
but the molecules will still remember both days.

And then there was Jesus, baptized by John
with cold river water and the midday sun.
And the wedding at Cana, where water turned to wine,
and a wild storm calmed from steps in a line.

And there was my mother who danced in the rain,
and the spring a thunderstorm took everything.
The first time I sank, the first time I cried,
and babies baptized in hospitals each night.

So as water slowly filled the basin,
I wonder, did Jesus remember those spaces—
those spaces where water had breathed new life,
and the spaces where water took with might?

I wonder if he thought of my baptism day,
and of the water in Flint, and of hurricanes.
I wonder if he could see the joy of summer rains,
and how winter snow heals our busiest days.

I wonder if he thought of it in cosmic
proportions—
water, this source of life and force;
water, the source that holds new birth;
water, the deep, the dark, the first.

Maybe he did, or maybe he didn't.
He saw a chance to love,
so love, he gave it,
lifting us up as if we were equals—
us a bunch of broken and hurting people.

But in using water, the simplest of things,
he wove together a memory chain—
of creation, and freedom, and baptism days—
for our minds to walk through, to dance in, to
know;
for our souls to swim through, to cherish, to float.

I should have known he would call them by name.
I should have known I would never be the same.
I should have known that the final night,
when Jesus had his disciples by his side,
would start with water, because that's where it
began.

The river runs through—I want to wade in.

Now, use the water you have prepared – the pitcher, the bowl, the washcloth, in any combination. Gently wash, and hear Jesus inviting you to do with others as he does with you.

Bread

“After he had washed their feet . . . [he] returned to the table.” (*John 13: 12*)

Jesus returned to the table, that simple common space,
moving from water and undeserved grace
to bread that nourishes and sustains our place—
two simple elements, no time to waste.

I should have known there would be water,
but of course there would be bread.
From the start of creation, God has tried to keep us fed—
fed on bread and roses and love we don't notice.
I should have known there would be water,
but of course there would be bread.

I should have known there would be space at the table for grace—
space for nerves, and questions, and absent confessions;
space for me and Elijah and Judas, without question.
I should have known there would be space,
but of course there would be bread—
for it started with manna, and all must be fed.

“This is my body, broken for you.
For you, five thousand;
for you, Israelite nation;
for you, child of the covenant;
Judas and Peter,
this is my body broken for *you*.”

That simple phrase, paired with the food of the day,
makes me human again—nourishes weak spots within.
It lifts me up and draws me back in—
breathing life into bones that were weary and thin.

For it's easy to be so hungry for God
that God must appear in the shape of a meal,
countering frailty, allowing me to heal.

So maybe that's why I come back to this space,
because I know God will be here, offering grace.
And I need that bread in order to feel—
in order to see the kingdom revealed.

I should have known there would be water,

but of course there would be bread—
For I am hungry, and all must be fed.

*Take time now to enjoy your meal. Take your time; savor each bite.
Know the love of God within and without.*

After your meal, pause to share your time with God. Please include prayers

...for the church universal, its ministry and God's mission in our midst

...for the well-being of creation

...for peace and justice in the world

...for the nations, and those in authority

...for the poor, the oppressed, the sick, the bereaved, the lonely, the houseless

...for all who suffer in body, mind or spirit;

...for the congregation, and for special concerns.

*Here, at the end of this Maundy Thursday service at home,
is a time to do a "stripping of the altar". If you have
prepared an altar, clear it completely.*

*In addition or instead, you may gather any faith related
items in your home: artwork, religious symbols, icons or
statues. Pack them away somewhere out of sight for the
next two days.*

*Clear away your meal from your table. Remove all items
from your table and wash it clean. Leave your table bare
until Easter morning.*

