

WORSHIP FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2022

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**MAUNDY THURSDAY**

**PRELUDE**

**OPENING SENTENCES** *(from John 13)*

One: Jesus said,  
    "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."  
    One who loves us to the end has invited us here.

**All: We are guests at the table of Jesus Christ.**

One: We are awed that our Savior has chosen us;

**All: we are embarrassed that Christ would wash our feet.**

One: We come to this memorial feast in gratitude;  
    we honor Christ's invitation above all others.

**All: At this table, we know cleansing and forgiveness.**

One: Through the broken bread and the cup of blessing,  
    we participate in the new life Christ offers us.

**All: We are empowered here to live as Christ's disciples.**

**INVOCATION**

**\*OPENING HYMN** "An Upper Room Did Our Lord Prepare" GtG 202

- 1. An upper room did our Lord prepare  
for those he loved until the end:  
and his disciples still gather there  
to celebrate their risen friend.**
- 2. A lasting gift Jesus gave his own:  
to share his bread, his loving cup.  
Whatever burdens may bow us down,  
he by his cross shall lift us up.**

3. **And after supper he washed their feet,  
for service, too, is sacrament.  
In Christ our joy shall be made complete:  
sent out to serve, as he was sent.**
  
4. **No end there is! We depart in peace,  
he loves beyond our uttermost:  
in every room in our Father's house  
Christ will be there, as Lord and Host.**

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**SCRIPTURE READINGS** John 13:1-15  
Matthew 27:27-31

JOHN 13:1-15 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper <sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup> got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." <sup>8</sup> Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." <sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" <sup>10</sup> 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." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." <sup>12</sup> 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 to you?" <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

MATTHEW 27:27-31 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>27</sup> Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. <sup>28</sup> They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, <sup>29</sup> and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" <sup>30</sup> They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. <sup>31</sup> After

*mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.*

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**HOMILY** by Pastor Bill Vincent

We have made our way to this evening, noting how *Lent is in Plain Sight* (Jill Duffield) with dust and bread, the cross and coins, coats and shoes and olive oil. We will speak of stones this Sunday.

But tonight we are left with Towels and Thorns.

An odd pairing, don't you think? One could almost say they are mutually exclusive. Now that's a scary thought, or at least disconcerting.

But if 'mutually exclusive' seems too extreme, maybe 'paradoxical' is better.

Or, at the very least, we could say there is a certain amount of tension in the pairing of these two: towels and thorns.

Thorns are very obviously a defensive, protective device. They ward off those who would ravenously graze upon the foliage – they ward off those animals with the threat of sharp pain and harm of some considerable duration.

Whereas towels are more likely to be used to soothe and ease; to dry off wet skin, to clean up dirty messes.

And especially in Jesus' hands, towels are used to serve. To serve those who, from culture's perspective, should be serving him. To care for those who, from others' assumptions, should instead care for him. And, let's be honest, they do care for him, the disciples do. But Jesus has taken the notion of service and caring a giant step further and suggested that service, and not stature, is the measure of greatness; that caring for, and not carousing with, is the focus of life.

And as followers of Jesus, we are meant to serve.

But service is not always easy. Service is hard. And service can take a lot out of you.

Aside from that whole notion turning our world-view upside down, where the first are really last and the last are really first; to serve one must reach out beyond oneself and offer yourself and give of yourself and open yourself up to others...and you make yourself vulnerable. Even as Jesus opened himself up to Judas, whom he knew would betray him.

The definition (root meaning) of the word 'vulnerable': 'capable of being wounded'.

And in reality, as we seek to serve – especially as we seek to serve in a world where service itself runs counter to the expectations and values of our world – then we see that to serve is to be (or at the very least, run the risk of being) bruised and battered and wounded.

Vulnerable: capable of being wounded.  
And wounding is precisely what the thorn does.

In its effort to protect, the thorn wounds.  
In its effort to serve, the towel all too often ends up torn...and wounded.

Thorns: wounding.

That is the world we live in. A world of thorns projecting from everyone (including us): thorns to protect our turf, thorns to protect ourselves from someone getting too close, thorns to protect our little world where we feel safe and cozy and no one else can get in.

Towels: willing to be wounded...all in order to serve.

That is the calling we seek to live.

-to be willing to be wounded by a thorn protecting someone's fragile ego, because we see the pain behind the thorn and know the experience of loneliness and isolation when all one projects is thorns.

-to be willing to be wounded by a thorn laced with the poison of a heart shredded by too many hurts and betrayals.

-to be willing to be wounded by a thorn, because the bearer of that thorn believes there is no other way to exist in this world.

There is a story that is told of a traveler who comes upon a man by the water's edge whose hand is hurt and swollen. When the traveler asks the man what has happened, the man explains. There is a scorpion trapped in the web of exposed tree roots by the water's edge. As the water is rising, the man sought to free the scorpion before the water overtook it and it drowned. But every time the man reaches in to free the scorpion, it stings him. "So why keep trying?" the traveler asks. To which the man replies, "As much as the scorpion's nature is to sting, so my nature is to help."

Which nature do we bear?

But when we know service – and serving – will lead, in our vulnerability, to being hurt and bruised, stung and stricken; why would we keep on trying? why would we keep on reaching out? why would we still care? why would we still serve?

**See, from his head, his hands, his feet,  
sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

So, Isaac Watts wrote in his incomparable hymn ("When I Survey the Wondrous Cross").

You see, when we see – and when we truly see – it is because of the depth of Christ's service to us – even though we wound him – because of the depth of his service and care and love that we are touched and transformed, that we are energized and given the will and the desire to serve and to give our all, even as he gave his all.

**Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.**

Watts concludes his hymn.

Would that we would have the same nature,  
-the “same mind as Christ” (Philippians 2:5);  
-to be “clothed in Christ” (Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27), surrounded, enveloped in his  
compassion;  
-to be shaped and shepherded by his arms and his life,  
in order to love and care and serve like him.

We live in a world of thorns.  
We are called to a life of towels.  
He would have us see the world as it is, yes – and choose life anyway...choose life his  
way.

### **LITANY**

One: O God most high,  
on this night we remember Jesus  
humbly washing the feet of his disciples.  
**All: Jesus has set an example for us; help us to follow him.**  
One: We pray for the church and for all who serve others,  
especially those in most need.  
**All: Jesus has set an example for us; help us to follow him.**  
One: We pray for peace among nations and religions,  
and peace among people.  
**All: Jesus has set an example for us; help us to follow him.**  
One: We pray for those who suffer  
because of hatred and hard-heartedness.  
**All: Jesus has set an example for us; help us to follow him.**  
One: We pray for those who are injured  
by acts of violence or natural disaster.  
**All: Jesus has set an example for us; help us to follow him.**  
One: We pray for those who are sick or dying,  
for those who are frightened or distraught.  
**All: Jesus has set an example for us; help us to follow him.**  
One: Most holy God,  
in Jesus Christ you show us that true glory is in humble service.  
Renew in us your call to love one another,  
to welcome the stranger,  
and to show Christ’s mercy in all we do.  
It is for his sake that we pray.  
**All: Amen.**

**\*HYMN** “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” GtG 221

1. **O sacred head, now wounded,  
with grief and shame weighed down;  
now scornfully surrounded  
with thorns, thine only crown;  
O sacred head, what glory,  
what bliss till now was thine!  
Yet, though despised and gory,  
I joy to call thee mine.**
  
2. **What thou, my Lord, hast suffered  
was all for sinners' gain:  
mine, mine was the transgression,  
but thine the deadly pain.  
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!  
'Tis I deserve thy place;  
look on me with thy favor,  
and grant to me thy grace.**
  
3. **What language shall I borrow  
to thank thee, dearest friend,  
for this thy dying sorrow,  
thy pity without end?  
O make me thine forever;  
and should I fainting be,  
Lord, let me never, never  
out-live my love to thee.**

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**SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER**

*Invitation to the Lord’s Table*

*Prayer of Thanksgiving*

**Leader:** The Lord be with you.

**People:** **And also with you.**

**Leader:** Lift up your hearts.

**People:** **We lift them to the Lord.**

**Leader:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People:** **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*(The prayer continues...)*

*The Lord's Prayer* (Contemporary)

**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.**

*Breaking of the Bread*

*Communion of the People*

*(Please eat the bread and drink the cup as you are served, remembering your personal commitment to Christ.)*

**Sing** "Let Us Break Bread Together" GtG 525

*Bread:*

- 1. Let us break bread together on our knees;  
let us break bread together on our knees.  
When I fall on my knees,  
with my face to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.**

*Cup:*

- 2. Let us drink wine together on our knees;  
let us drink wine together on our knees.  
When I fall on my knees,  
with my face to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.**

*Prayer:*

- 3. Let us praise God together on our knees;  
let us praise God together on our knees.  
When I fall on my knees,  
with my face to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.**

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**\*CLOSING HYMN** “Lord, We Have Come at Your Own Invitation” GtG 503

1. **Lord, we have come at your own invitation,  
chosen by you, to be counted your friends;  
yours is the strength that sustains dedication;  
ours, a commitment we know never ends.**
  
2. **Here, at your table, confirm our intention;  
give it your seal of forgiveness and grace;  
teach us to serve without pride or pretension,  
Lord, in your kingdom, whatever our place.**
  
3. **When, at your table, each time of returning,  
vows are renewed and our courage restored,  
may we increasingly glory in learning  
all that it means to accept you as Lord.**

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**\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

- One: We have remembered and celebrated together;  
**All: now we are sent out to serve in Christ’s name.**  
One: We have been washed and fed;  
**All: now we go out to follow Christ’s example of service.**  
One: Let your daily life express thanksgiving to God;  
let your daily acts express God’s love to others.  
**All: We dare to offer to others what we have experienced.  
God’s steadfast love and faithfulness assure us.**  
One: Walk in confidence through Good Friday to Easter.  
**All: God’s love sustains us through death to new life.**  
One: Go in peace. And let the gathered people of God say...  
**All: ...Amen.**

**POSTLUDE**

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