



### **Maundy Thursday Reflection**

On this evening of contemplation we journey towards the Garden of tears. This is particularly poignant tonight as our tears flow for the heartache of the nations. Please make yourself comfortable and light a candle if it is helpful to you.

#### ***Opening Words***

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you: **And also with you.**

We come as invited guests to join Christ's table. May the grace of the last supper speak into our hearts. **Amen**

#### ***Bible Reading*** Matthew 26: 14-16; 20-22; 26-29; 31; 33-40

One of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I betray him to you?' They paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.' And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, 'Surely not I, Lord?'

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'

Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."

Peter said to him, 'Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you.' Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' Peter said to him, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And so said all the disciples.

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.'<sup>37</sup> He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not my will but yours.' Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Could you not stay awake with me for one hour?'

### ***Pause for Reflection***

*What spoke to you about the text? Why might this be?*

### ***Address***

Jesus said 'I am deeply grieved. Stay awake with me.' Jesus knew what was coming, wanted it not to be, but knew it was to be. To ease this unthinkable burden he asks the disciples, his friends to 'stay awake' with him. They, not fully realizing what is to come, succumb to sleep and we see the human side of Jesus as he is hurt by this.

Jesus wants us, needs us! What a revelation. We see this also when he bows down and washes the disciples feet. They of course are uncomfortable with this, aren't we all?! Who wants to be vulnerable in this way? We are all now over familiar with washing our hands, but our feet, by someone else!!

The point of course is not in the washing, but in embracing the symbolic gesture of what Jesus did, of why he performed a lowly task, a task of equality and of service. Jesus desired for us to be each other's servants. He desires us to 'watch' with the anxious, the fearful, those in need.' In doing this we service him and do what his friends didn't realise the importance of that night.

In the despair of today, when all of us no doubt are feeling vulnerable in some way, our hearts are thankful and gladdened by all those who are giving of themselves more than they thought they would ever be asked to. We see the dedication, the sacrifice of frontline workers who 'keep the watch' for the sick. The carers and volunteers who 'keep the watch' for the isolated and vulnerable. The list of beautiful humanity goes on.

And what if you are on the other side, the one who needs to receive care and support at this time? Well that is a sacrifice too, of being vulnerable (aka having your feet washed in public!), it is hard. But Jesus' experience this night shows that it is OK to be both of these things. It is OK to be vulnerable and to need each other, and it is good and right to serve one another. Jesus humbled himself, and if the very heart of God can do this, may we do so too.

Tonight Jesus invites you to dine with him. He then bows down and washes your feet. Two vulnerable people together and then he asks you to 'watch' with him...

Tonight, for Jesus, for his disciples, maybe for ourselves, all looks lost. But even in the darkness, the fear and the seeming hopelessness, we know because of this journey Jesus is taking to the cross that we are not forgotten or forsaken, we are his beloved, deemed worthy of God's ultimate love sacrifice. All will be well. Amen

### ***Prayers***

Almighty God,

On this, the night he was betrayed, your Son Jesus Christ washed his disciples' feet.

**We commit ourselves to follow his example of love and service.**

On this night, he prayed for his disciples to be one.

**We pray for the coming together of all people**

On this night, he commanded them to love, but suffered rejection himself.

**We pray for the hurting, the lonely, the vulnerable, the rejected and unloved.**

**We pray for the grieving and all who are sick.**

On this night, he reminded them that if the world hated them it hated him first.

**We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith, and those who speak out for justice.**

On this night he commanded us to love one another.

**We give thanks for our family and friends.**

**We pray for all Frontline and Keyworkers, for all volunteers.**

**We pray for the grace to love as Christ loves us.**

On this night Jesus, you offered up your life for us, confident of the glory that awaited you.

We pray for confidence at the hour of our death to trust in the glory that now awaits us too.

Loving God, from the depths of our hearts we thank-you and glorify you for this solemn and holy night. **Amen**