

Maundy Thursday Devotion by Pastor Brad Doty

What Occurs on Maundy Thursday?

What do you think of when it comes to Maundy Thursday?

- The original Passover in Exodus?
- The Passover Meal where Jesus eats with his disciples?
- Holy Communion where Jesus for the first time passes bread and wine to the disciples telling them to do this in remembrance of me?
- First Communion where children receive the body and blood of Christ for the first time?
- The Foot Washing where Jesus washes his disciple's feet
- Peter's response where he tells Jesus to not wash his feet and then Jesus' response?
- Jesus telling the disciples that one of them will betray him?
- Judas actually going and betraying Jesus?

Maundy Thursday is full with many rich texts and emotions. So much goes on this day, the church actually splits the day up and combines all of the gospels into one story, when we have a Maundy Thursday worship service. It is similar to what we do with the birth of Jesus, our nativities have the shepherds and the wisemen. We put the foot washing story together with the Passover meal, assuming it occurs during the Passover meal. Interestingly, the Gospel of John does not have a Passover meal; Jesus' death is considered to be the Passover for he was the sacrifice, the sacrificial lamb. Every year, the gospel reading comes from the Gospel of John where Jesus washes the disciple's feet. This is why we call it Maundy Thursday, Jesus sets the mandate or commands the disciples to wash one another's feet as he sets the example for them.

Our Maundy Thursday Service has a focal point on Holy Communion as Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and this is the time we have our kids receive their first communion. The traditional Passover meal Jesus eats with his disciples and institutes the Lord's Supper occurs in the Gospels of Matthew (26), Mark (14) and Luke (22). It is also here that Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and where he is arrested.

The church ends Maundy Thursday with Judas leaving to betray Jesus. The official day is not yet over after Judas leaves. Jesus and the disciples finishing the meal and then go to the Garden of Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives, to pray. Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him to pray. Jesus separates himself to pray three different times and all three times he comes back to the three disciples, he finds them sleeping. Jesus' prayers are powerful and emotional as Jesus knows he is about to be arrested and then what is to come the next day

The day officially ends after Peter denies Jesus three times. Friday morning is when Jesus comes before Pilate

How Does this Day Touch You?

This is a very emotional day. We all can relate to different parts of what occurs on Maundy Thursday. What part of this day touches you or what part of this day brings pain or brings you to tears?

One thing our family did every night, was sit together at the dinner table and ate dinner together. My mom almost always made the meal as my dad commuted a long distance to get to and from work, so we usually sat down to eat as soon as he got home. It was our family time together. This reminds me of Jesus eating the passover meal with his disciples, all sitting at the table together, probably not all on one side of the table, as is depicted in traditional artwork of this meal. Maybe this year, this part of the story brings you pain as we are mandated to stay at home and not gather in groups over ten.

This Maundy Thursday brings a different kind of mandate for us during COVID-19. If Jesus was having his Passover meal during COVID-19, what would Jesus' mandate or command be to the disciples? To connect and care for one another virtually? To care for those who have lost their jobs and are unable to provide for themselves and their family?

We all have been hurt by a friend or family member who has betrayed us. Could you imagine knowing you are going to be betrayed as Jesus knew Judas was going to betray him? This was painful for Jesus. He also knew Peter was going to deny him. After all they had been through Jesus' disciples, his friends, were falling apart and hurting Jesus. We do these things too, it isn't intentional, but it could be argued that Satan lead Judas to betray Jesus and Peter did not intend to deny Jesus, these things just happened. This is the tough part of life and sin, they just happen some times.

When have you come to your knees in desperation? When have you been at your last straw and feel as if you have lost everything or you are in control of nothing? Jesus

knows the feeling you are having. When he went to go pray, he told the disciples, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me" (Matthew 26:38). There are two important things to note here, one, Jesus goes to God in his grief and struggle; two, Jesus knows the importance of community during this time. He wants these three disciples to stay with him and stay awake. Jesus knows God has a plan for him and for his life, but the human side of Jesus is struggling with what he will have to go through and prays to God, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet now what I want but what you want" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus prayed these words to God three times, imagine what Jesus is going through!

Can you relate? When have you struggled in this way, what was causing you to feel these emotions? Maybe you are feeling these things right now. Who is your community that you can go to during this time? Do you expect others to know what you are going through and be there for you or do you reach out to them as Jesus reached out to the three disciples he brought with them?

Where is God During These Times?

There is an addition to Luke's gospel, which other versions of the gospel lack, where angels come and give Jesus strength after he prays his prayer and he only prays it once: "[Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]]"

I truly believe God gives us strength. There are things that happen to us in our lives that would pull us down and we would not be able to get up, emotionally. In these times, I believe God is fully with us, giving us the strength we need to get through that hour, which then gives us strength to get through the next hour and the next.

God knows us and God knows what we are going through. God knows when we are going to be betrayed or denied. God knows when we are going to lose our job or not be able to provide for our family. God knows when we are going to suffer and when our world will be shaken.

When these things occur, this is when God sends even more angels to be with us, support us, care for us to help us get through that hour and to give us the strength we need. Yes, God is present with us and God provides us with our family, friends, church and support group to be there for us. These people are the angels God sends to us during these most difficult times. Lean on them, use them and let them be there for you knowing that God has sent them and that God is there with you through them.

Maundy Thursday 2020

God loves you and cares for you so much. God knows what you are going through and God is there crying with you and wiping away your tears. We believe in a God who is present with us every step of our lives. Through every situation of our lives. God loves you as his own, for you are a child of God.

In our lives, we too experience death and go through Good Fridays, but we too experience Easter and life!

Thanks be to God. Amen!