

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL
Wallace, Idaho**

Worship

Maundy Thursday

April 9, 2020

Announcements

Welcome to worship with the United Church of Christ Congregational in Wallace. This is one of the holiest nights of the year, when we long to gather to remember Jesus' meal with his disciples, and the dark and lonely road he walked between the Upper Room and the cross. While the reality of our situation keeps us confined to our homes, we are still able to gather for worship – in spirit and in prayer, if not beside each other in the flesh. It's good to share this time. As with our earlier video services, I'm sending written materials to go with this service, and invite you to join with me in the responsive and unison portions of this service as well as in the music. And I invite you to bring some bread and drink to the table, so we can partake together of God's great gift to us. Let us worship God.

Call to Worship

This night is different than other nights.

Though we are scattered in homes, apartments, households, we can still gather in God's heart.

This worship is different than previous years.

We cannot gather as God's household, yet we can still find ourselves together in God's heart and love.

This meal is different from other meals.

Alone, with family, with just our pets, we begin to understand the weariness, the uncertainty, the questions which sat around that table long ago with Jesus and his friends.

At the same time, this night, this worship, this meal are the same.

We are still God's beloved, who is with us in these moments, these days, these nights. We are still the followers of Jesus, who would wash our hearts of our doubts and fears. We are still comforted by the Spirit, who blesses the meal we will share this night.

(Thom M. Shuman, LectionaryLiturgies.blogspot.com)

Song "Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

Beneath the cross of Jesus I gladly take my stand -
The shadow of mighty Rock within a weary land;
A home within the wilderness, A rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat, And the burden of the day.

Meditation

I have no idea how many times I heard it, but every time my reaction was the same. All of last weekend, the powers that be worked hard to prepare us for this week, for the coronavirus numbers of sick, of dead, of beds filled and beds needed, of medical personnel sick and volunteers needed, of ventilators in short supply, of the unprecedented, unstoppable, unspeakable wall of suffering headed our way. And every time they spoke of it, they said, it's going to be our Pearl Harbor, our 9-11; and every time my mind followed that with, our Holy Week. I think what they meant and what I mean is that this is one of those pivotal moments that will change us forever and define us for generations, how we respond will shape and color who we are when we come out on the other side of this.

It's interesting timing, don't you think? I'm not inclined to say it's a divine ploy to get our attention or

make a point, but I do think it's worth our awareness and reflection. And as deeply as I wish we could observe these days together and focus on Jesus' journey toward the cross instead of being distracted and consumed by the events of the day and the constraints on our activities, I can think of very few other Holy Weeks when life has so thoroughly coincided with and fleshed out the truth at the heart of the story, where we've been given such a clear view of the pain and suffering involved, and such a direct question as to where we stand and with whom.

This is a night when we remember the events of Jesus' last days, and the challenges his followers faced as they scrambled and squirmed to accompany him through the streets and courtyards, into the temple and out to Gethsemane with him. They gathered to observe the Passover together, and he interrupted the ancient ritual to talk about the ways in which his broken body and spilled blood would nourish and sustain them in the journey ahead. They pledged themselves as faithful followers forever, and he called out the one who would betray him to the authorities and the other who would deny him in the courtyard. He threw himself on the ground, pleading with God that this cup of suffering might pass him by, and then he yielded to the way and wisdom of God – while his disciples turned away from his agony and went to sleep. He was tortured by the very worst this world has to offer, yet held fast to his trust in God and clarity about what is right and true. Angry faces and threatening voices taunted him with cries for condemnation and suffering, and he stood firmly rooted in the humility of service and his unconditional commitment to love.

This is a night when we are invited to look again at Jesus' lonely, agonizing, yet courageous and faithful walk through death, and listen for what he has to say to us. As he did, we are encouraged to trust that God is with us, that God weeps with us and for us, holds us and all who suffer this night. We can learn from Jesus how to speak to our own trembling hearts, hearts that so often prioritize self-protection above everything else that matters, and receive the strength we need to reach beyond our comfort and convenience in order to care for others. Following Jesus means stepping away from the vicious cycles of denial and fear that rob us of the abundant life Jesus died to give us. Being with Jesus this night invites us to a life of humble service, dedicated to claiming as our own his unconditional commitment to love. Amen.

Call to Recollection

Just as on that night long ago, we face choices: will we continue to live in fear, or step out in faith; will we trust in the One who is with us, or listen to the hollow words around us? Let us confess our lives, our emptiness, our worries to the One who calls us, feeds us, redeems us, as we pray together, saying,

Unison Prayer for Forgiveness

It has all disappeared, our God, our certainty of how life was to be, our daily activities, jobs and routines. It has all been snatched away from us, our lunches with friends, our family gatherings on porches and in backyards. It has all become so fearful, those simple things like going to a store, giving another a hug, attending a concert, a sporting event, or even a worship service.

Yet this feeling, this uncertainty, these fears are exactly what you experienced on that night so long ago, Brother of our hearts. All your certainty dissipated as easily as that crowd that cheered you just a few days before. Your hopes, your dreams, your desires for your friends had been snatched away by those powers and circumstances beyond your control. Even a simple, last meal with your closest friends was full of doubts, questions, recriminations, as you huddled isolated from the world.

So now, fill us with your presence, Spirit of that night and this night and all nights. Fill us with that grace which enables us to look beyond our fears, to live as people of faith. Fill us with that love, which strengthens us to care for the most vulnerable around us, rather than the most

powerful. Fill us with that hope, which is never quarantined, never isolated, never separated from us, in these and all the moments to come.

Silence

Assurance of Pardon

On this loneliest of nights, on this holiest of nights, here is the good news we need: God is with us, just as with those Hebrew ancestors so long ago. God is with us, just as with Jesus and his friends that night we remember tonight. God is with us . . . God is with us . . . God is with us.

In remembrance, we are together, though scattered; in remembrance, we share bread wherever we are; in remembrance, we drink of the cup of grace, whoever we are; in remembrance, we will trust, we will hope, we will live, we will follow. Amen.

(Thom M. Shuman, LectonaryLiturgies.blogspot.com)

Scripture Reading Matthew 26:20-30

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?" He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so."

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."

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Song "Eat this Bread"

Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and never be hungry
Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and you will not thirst.

The Communion Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, for you have brought forth bread from the earth.
Blessed are you, O God, for you have created the fruit of the vine.

In the beginning you watered the earth that man and woman might have food and drink.
You gave to your servant Sarah bread to strengthen her family on their journey,
and wine to make them glad.
You called Moses and his people out of bondage and refreshed them with food in the wilderness.
You gave Mary and Jesus their daily bread to share.

And here at your table you offer us bread and cup for the journey to nourish us as sons and daughters,
And so with all our sisters and brothers, before us and beside us,
We join in the song of your unending greatness.

**Holy, holy, holy, God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God
Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God; hosanna in the highest.**

Lord Jesus Christ present with us now, as we do in this place what you did in an upstairs room,
breathe your Spirit upon us and upon this bread and this cup, that they may be heaven's food and drink
for us, renewing, sustaining and making us whole, and that we may be your body on earth, loving and
caring in the world. **Amen.**

Blessing and Sharing the Elements

Among friends, gathered around a table, Jesus took bread, and, having blessed it, he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'This is my body which is broken for you'. In the same way he took the cup, and, having given thanks for it, he poured it out, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant with God, Sealed with my blood. Take this and share it. I shall drink wine with you next in the coming realm of God'.

So now, following Jesus' example, we share this bread and this cup; The ordinary things of the world through which God will bless us.

Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven.

We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the Cup of Blessing.

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lord Jesus Christ, you have put your life into our hands; now we put our lives into yours. Take us, renew and remake us. What we have been is past; what we shall be, through you, still awaits us. Lead us on. Take us with you. Amen.

Song "Journey to Gethsemane"

Journey to Gethsemane, go and feel the tempter's power;
Your Redeemer's conflict see, watch the anguish of this hour;
Do not hide or turn away: learn from Jesus how to pray.

Scripture Readings

The Shadow of Betrayal

Matthew 26:20-25

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?" He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so."

The Shadow of Desertion

Matthew 26:31-35

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.'

But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." 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.

The Shadow of Lethargy

Mark 14:32-41

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you

not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Song "When Jesus Wept"

When Jesus wept, the falling tear in mercy flowed beyond all bound;
When Jesus groaned, a trembling fear seized all the guilty world around.

The Shadow of Violence

Matthew 26:47-52

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him." At once he came up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to do." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

The Shadow of Denial

Luke 22:54-62

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

The Shadow of Cynicism

John 18:33-38a

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

Song "What Wondrous Love is This"

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

The Shadow of Irresponsibility

Matthew 27:20-26

Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they

said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

The Shadow of Mockery

Mark 15:16-20

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Song "Were You There?"

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Silence

Closing Prayer

Christ Jesus, One of us betrayed you,
another denied you,
and all of us have forsaken you.
Yet you have remained faithful to death,
even death upon a cross.
Strengthen us so we do not turn aside
but follow you through sunlight and shadow alike.
For the final victory belongs to you, Christ Jesus. Amen.

Benediction

Go in peace.
May Jesus Christ, who for our sake became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you this night and forever. Amen.