

# **Maundy Thursday Liturgy - “*The Oil Press*”**

Rev. Scott McGinnis - First Presb. Church of Newton, KS - April 9, 2020

This is not an easy time we are experiencing. For some, if you are on the front lines caring for the ill, this is a health risk and a very anxious time. For others, a bit removed, this may be a time of worry. Maundy Thursday was just this kind of time. Jesus, about to go to the Cross, prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

## **Welcome & Call to Worship**

Tonight we recall and remember  
Tonight we remember what Christ has done  
Tonight we reflect and worship  
Tonight we listen and question  
Tonight we follow our Lord  
Tonight we remember the table  
Tonight we pray in the Garden  
Tomorrow we will follow to the Cross

Would you join me in a time of prayer and reflection this  
Maundy Thursday?

*Heavenly Father, God of all power and might; when You  
sent forth Your Spirit, we were created; when we falter,*

*You lift us up. We give You thanks for both life and breath. We praise You for Your indwelling presence. Come now, Holy Spirit, Breath of God, blow upon us today on Maundy Thursday; take away the chaos and tiredness of our lives. Move within us and confirm in our hearts the resurrection hope of Easter morning. Renew us, we pray, in the name of Jesus, our Risen Lord. Amen.*

I would like to read some of the Maundy Thursday story from Matthew 26 and Luke 2. It's quite a bit of the story, so this is where you can hit pause, get some decaf coffee, and settle down to listen.

Scripture                      Matthew 26:1-4

**<sup>1</sup>When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, <sup>2</sup> "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."<sup>3</sup> Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup> and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.**

Scripture                      Luke 2:7-14

**Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." <sup>9</sup>They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" <sup>10</sup>He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a**

jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters<sup>11</sup> and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'<sup>12</sup> And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."<sup>13</sup> And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.  
<sup>14</sup> And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him.

Here are the Words of Institution for Lord's Supper.

Scripture

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,<sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

<sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

<sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

### Jesus Poured Out for Us

Scripture

Luke 22:15-20

<sup>15</sup> And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

<sup>17</sup> After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

<sup>19</sup> And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

<sup>20</sup> In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

### The Cup He Took for Us

The safety and welcome of the table often keeps us from following to the garden. The garden is not a place we like to go - it's a place of our fears and our anxieties. It's not the place of nice neat answers. It's the place of questions. It's the place where we might weep, struggle, and even wrestle with God. It's the place of the less popular Psalms, the Psalms of lament. It's the place where our will, our faith, and our flesh meet.

### In the Garden of Gethsemane

Scripture

Mark 14:32-42

<sup>32</sup> And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." <sup>33</sup>And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup>And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." <sup>35</sup>And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup>And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." <sup>37</sup>And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." <sup>39</sup>And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. <sup>40</sup>And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. <sup>41</sup>And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup>Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

The Garden is where we might even struggle to hang on. This is what it means *to GO* to the Garden. This is Gethsemane and Jesus went to the Garden. Jesus already knew what was coming. He had even told His followers, plainly on three separate occasions that He was going to die, who was going to condemn Him, and exactly how long He was going to be dead. He had already poured out the cup around the table, so His disciples

might have started to understand what He was about to do, but now it was the night before. And He struggled. He was about to drink the cup of wrath - the cup of God's judgment - that that was intended for the nations - for all people - the punishment that was due them for their sin. He was going to drink it - for all people. Once and for all. The sinless Lamb, Jesus, was going to drink THAT cup for us!

Gethsemane means "the oil press" - it's a garden located at the foot of the Mount of Olives. It's full of densely grown olive trees, and here is where the olives are crushed in order to release their pure oil. Gethsemane is a place of pressure, we could say to be in Gethsemane is to be in the "oil press".

Jesus knew what it was to be in the oil press. It was the facing of the prospect of the cross, of the abandonment from those closest to Him, and of an unjust trial. He was so overcome that He fell down on the ground in anguish - and cried out to God. Begging God to make another way.

Jesus understands what it is to be crushed - under pressure - struggling - and crying out to God. Whether we have verbalized it or not, we've probably all have had our Gethsemane. Moments in the oil press of life.

Jesus knew betrayal. Jesus knew abandonment. Jesus knew loneliness.

In His time of need - when He was most distressed - He took his closest friends into the garden with Him and they fell asleep. In His time of need, His closest friends were not just unhelpful, they weren't present. They left Him to struggle through this on His own. If you have ever felt abandoned by others or lonely in your time of need. Jesus felt that. Tonight He experienced that in the Garden.

If you have ever had a crisis of faith - Jesus struggled with God this night. He knew God's will for Him was good, but in the sight of God's plan for His life, the plan already He Himself had chosen, He wondered if it HAD to be this way... Is there another way?

If you have struggled - wondering how you were going to get through this: Jesus knew what it was to be in need. He was SO in need, that God sent a ministering angel to him to strengthen him.

If you have felt at your breaking point - Jesus was there. Tonight He was there.

And then, crying out to God, Jesus came through the Garden. It wasn't a point where he got stuck. He came through it - because even in His struggle, He cried out to God. Jesus' crying out to God, gives us a model for making it through our own "garden times."

First - He asked for support from the community of faith. How important this is for us too? No Christian should walk

alone.

Second - He did not try to avoid God - but went directly to the Father - He prayed. He cried to God - expressing exactly how he felt. He was honest before God.

We can do that too. Sometimes we think our prayers have to be "neat" and "perfect" or nicely scripted to exude faith. But faith is coming to God, asking for help, and trusting God to be faithful.

Third - He prayed boldly "Not what I will, but what You will". This may be the hardest step for us, but know that God will give us the strength we need to pray this prayer. God sent a ministering angel to support Jesus in his time of need. God, through the Holy Spirit, will meet us as well.

The Garden of Gethsemane is a place of invitation to be real like Jesus, to bring ourselves to God, and to pray, **"Thy will be done."**

Tonight we can take comfort in the fact that Jesus understands what it's like to be in the Garden. In the "oil press" of life.

Tonight we give thanks that Jesus....

- Chose to drink the cup for us
- Chose to take the cup of wrath – the cup of judgment

So that we can be free....



- Free from sin and death
- Free from the garden caused by sin
- Free, both now and forever. Hallelujah!

If you feel you are in a Gethsemane experience....

I encourage you to let the pressure push you closer to God.

Come to Him honestly with your need and then

Follow Jesus through the Garden. Don't get stuck.

If there is something you're shrinking back from in fear....

I encourage you to hold onto Jesus

Your companion in Gethsemane for

He knows the way through it!

Jesus will strengthen you by His Holy Spirit and enable you to walk safely through your Gethsemane.

### Prayer & Closing Thoughts

*Jesus, Thank You for choosing the Cross.*

*Thank You for the Cup you gave, and*

*Thank You for the Cup you drank for us.*

*Help us to hold fast in prayer, as You did Jesus, in the midst of anguish, disappointment, fear, confusion, and*

*great loss. Jesus – help us to know - that just as God the Father was with You - YOU are with us by Your Holy Spirit.*

*Jesus help us to pray as you prayed:*

*Not what I will – but what Your will be done.*

*In Your Name Jesus, Amen.*