**9th April: Maundy Thursday**

**Collect:**

God our Father,
your Son Jesus Christ was obedient to the end
and drank the cup prepared for him:
may we who cannot share his table this year
watch with him through the night of suffering
and find new ways to be faithful. **Amen.**

**Epistle:**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
   did not regard equality with God
   as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
   taking the form of a slave,
   being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
   he humbled himself
   and became obedient to the point of death—
   even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
   and gave him the name
   that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
   every knee should bend,
   in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
   that Jesus Christ is Lord,
   to the glory of God the Father.
 *Philippians 2:5-11*

**Gospel:**

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. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 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. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’ Jesus answered, ‘You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’

Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, “Where I am going, you cannot come.” 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.’

*John 13:1-7, 31-35*

**Making Meaning:**

Maundy Thursday is rich with story and rich with meaning. First, we remember how Jesus shared the Passover with the disciples. They were all good Jews, they enjoyed this annual festival and the remembrance of being freed from slavery in Egypt. But the air was thick with tension and we know, with hindsight, that this was ‘the night before he died’.

Then Jesus did a new thing. He re-purposed the bread and wine of this sacred meal to institute a new meal in remembrance of the new covenant, the new freedom of all God’s children. This may have ironic and painful overtones this year as, in lock-down, we cannot make Communion together.

Even more radical, Jesus assumed the role of a slave, washing his disciples’ feet to show them the full extent of his love. This year we’re being challenged to find new ways of loving and serving, but we have to love ourselves first. Perhaps while we stay at home, we should take time to wash even our own feet.

The final part of Maundy Thursday night is the time at which we remember Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46). This is Jesus’ toughest encounter with mental suffering in dreadful anticipation of all that the next day would bring. His appeal to his disciples is his appeal to us tonight: “Watch and Pray” – how appropriate for 2020!

**Music for Maundy Thursday:**

If you’ve got a CD or even an old LP of Stainer’s *Crucifixion*, now’s the time to dust it off; it begins “And they came to a place called Gethsemane…”
The libretto is doubtless available on-line – just google! Likewise, but in a very different style, if you’ve got a recording of Andrew Lloyd-Webber’s *Jesus Christ Superstar* there is a very moving track entitled ‘Gethsemane’ - but save the rest till tomorrow!