

THE FIRST 15

Thursday, March 28, 2024

Today is Maundy Thursday, March 28 and each day of Holy Week we journey closer to the cross with Jesus.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and gracious God, I seek you in these moments of morning silence. As I read the account of Jesus' last week on earth, I listen for the particular message you have for me today. Speak to me through the power of your Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 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." 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. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table." Luke 22:14-21

REFLECTION

Everyday during Holy Week we read scripture from the happenings of that same day of Jesus' last week on earth. The eventful week is coming to a climax and this night is the final gathering Jesus has with his disciples. He sends Peter and John to make preparations for the disciples to eat the Passover meal together. They go to find a large furnished upper room and diligently prepare the traditional food. When the twelve arrive, in a loving gesture, Jesus takes the posture of a servant and washes the disciples' feet. All the disciples' grimy feet are cleansed, including Judas Iscariot who is looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus to the religious authorities. Jesus gives his followers a "mandate" or command for them to follow after he is gone. The word "maundy" is Latin for mandate (*mandatum*) and that is why some call today Maundy Thursday. Christ's mandate is for his followers to love one another.

The final hour has arrived. It is the night before Jesus gave himself up for me and for the world. I gather alongside the disciples seated at the table in the upper room to share in the Passover meal. I hear the eagerness in Jesus' voice. He knows this is the last time together. He knows what lies before him. He knows he will suffer. He takes the loaf of bread in his hands, thanks God for the gift and breaks it - simultaneously describing how his body will be broken for me. He takes the cup in his hands and reveals this new covenant with me and all people made by the shedding of his blood on the cross. A blood covenant. Jesus' blood poured out for me to cover my sins, remove the stain of original sin and cleanse my sorrowful soul. Because of Jesus, I am counted "not guilty" and made pure and white at the cross.

Ask: How do I experience Jesus' sacrifice for me in the act of Holy Communion? How do I recognize his body broken for me and his blood poured out for me?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Come, Lord Jesus, I invite you to dine with me at the table of my soul. Be present in the bread and cup of your sacrifice and remind me of the new covenant made through the shedding of your blood for me on Calvary's tree. Let me experience the outpouring of your grace through the power of your Holy Spirit in the sacrament you instituted this night long ago. Amen.