

Dorset South & West Circuit Maundy Thursday Written Service 2021 by Revd John Yarrien

Call to Worship:

Tonight is a night of darkness. We gather it together like gauze and wrap our souls in it.

Tonight is a night of final things. We gather together in the darkness and hold hands for one last meal.

Tonight is a night of water. We gather together to cleanse and prepare.

Tonight is a night of tears. We gather together and pray that the tears can wash away the betrayal yet to come.

Tonight is a night of betrayal. We gather together to support one another, but one of us will destroy.

Gracious God, as we remember the first Communion of Christ's faithful followers, we are reminded of our own need to pause and remember. As we take the bread and wine this evening, and as we wash each other's feet, cleanse our hearts in preparation for Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Amen.

Hymn STF 571 – As your family, Lord, see us here

1 As your family, Lord, see us here,
as your family, Lord, see us here,
as your family, Lord, see us here,
O Lord, see us here.

4 Make us faithful, Lord, to your will,
make us faithful, Lord, to your will,
make us faithful, Lord, to your will,
O Lord, to your will.

3 Fill our spirits, Lord, with your love,
fill our spirits, Lord, with your love,
fill our spirits, Lord, with your love,
O Lord, give your love.

5 As your family, Lord, see us here,
as your family, Lord, see us here,
as your family, Lord, see us here,
O Lord, see us here.

Prayer of Confession: -

Let us confess our sins to God and ask him to cleanse us.

Father eternal, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against you, against our neighbour, and against each other, in thought, word and deed, in the evil we have done and in the good we have not done, through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.

We have wounded your love and marred your image within us.

We are sorry and ashamed and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and lead us out of darkness to walk as children of light:

Absolution: -

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. This is Christ's gracious word: 'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading: John 13: 1-17, 31-35

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.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my

feet only but also my hands and my head!’ Jesus said to him, ‘One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.’ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, ‘Not all of you are clean. After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.’

When he had gone out, 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.’

Sermon: “Washed, transformed and sent to be Superheroes for Jesus”:

Back in 2008 I had the privilege of walking the streets of the Old Town part of Jerusalem, as part of a three week trip to visit Holy Sites and YMCA Centres across the region. As we walked around the ancient town of Jericho – the roads were dusty and sandy, and wearing flip-flops or sandals as we walked around, it wasn’t until I got back to the hostel where we were staying that I noticed my feet were dirty, and in desperate need of a clean. That experience gave me a very little glimpse into the state of the feet that Jesus may have faced as he dropped to the floor at the meal with his disciples to wash their feet, to make them clean. My theme this evening is being “washed, transformed and sent to be Superheroes for Jesus”. I’ll come back to the being sent as Superheroes for Jesus in a moment, but first let’s set a bit of context to this passage of Jesus sharing a meal with his disciples from the Gospel of John.

In those ancient, early Christian days, when people gathered and were invited to a meal after they had walked through the dusty streets, guests would be greeted by somebody at the door with a towel and a basin, ready to wash the dirty feet and hands of the invited guests. The person at the door plays a fundamental part in the meal, even though they never actually participate in the meal itself. This is the nameless, lowly slave – who humbly serves all who walk through the door – no questions asked. Today we might call these people the poor, those on zero hours contracts, the marginalised. They do all those hidden things that make our lives, our society, happen.

Just take a moment now, and visualise yourselves in this unfolding scene: you have gathered as one of Jesus’ disciples to share a meal, to talk with Jesus and hear something he seems really keen to tell you, but you’re not sure what it is all about.

Somehow this feels different to the other meals you have had with Jesus. Then Jesus takes off his outer robe and ties a towel around his waist. He takes the basin of water, and he begins by kneeling at your feet, requesting the honour of washing them. How do you feel? What would you do? What on earth would you say to Jesus? This is the fascinating interplay between Jesus and Peter that unfolds. Peter just doesn’t quite seem to get what Jesus is talking about, he can’t get his head around why Jesus is washing his feet, it’s just all a bit too much, and all a bit odd. He can’t understand because in this moment Jesus is taking the role of the insignificant slave standing by the door.

If Jesus was sitting at my feet, I think I might be a bit embarrassed, that anyone would want or need to look at my feet. I would probably react a little like Peter – ‘no, no, no Jesus – You can’t do that for Me!’ This is an unusual act, especially for a teacher / Rabbi to do, and many like Peter would feel very

uncomfortable at the prospect of anyone touching their feet. But – the towel, the basin and the water are markers of our faith, and markers of the mission of the Church. We are called to humble ourselves, to serve others, to wash and to cleanse, to change and transform our lives and other people's lives through acts of service and love, for God and for our neighbours.

This is about letting go, allowing acts of service and love to happen to us, and to humbly offering those acts of service and love to others. This is about allowing love to transgress the norms of our world, To allow us to connect more fully with the redemptive love of God, poured out by Jesus on the cross. Love, sacrifice, once and for all, now and forever, through Christ.

If we are to be transformed by this washing and cleansing, poured out for us in Jesus, we have to first "Let him in". Jesus declares that if we cannot allow him or others to wash our feet, we can't claim to be his disciples, we can't have a share of his redemptive love for the world. We must first be served and then serve others. We can't expect to show love, to be transformed, to share the truth of Jesus Christ with the world, if we don't allow God to love us fully, to clean away the dirt of our lives, to make us fresh, ready and filled with the Spirit to face the world. To allow Jesus to cleanse our feet is to remove all that prevents us from using our feet to follow him. To scrub away our insecurities, to wash away our weariness, to buff off our bitterness. And then our feet are refreshed to do what feet in scripture, in both the Old and the New Testaments, were meant to do. **To Follow God.**

Finally, I said I would come back to being sent as Super-heroes for Jesus in the world. Cora dragged me one year to the Charism Service at Southwell Minster, and Bishop Paul spoke about the fact that we need to engage with the 'Super-Hero for Jesus' that is innately inside each one of us. We need to remove all that blocks us from being Christ's heroes on earth today. There might be blocks that we have put in for ourselves, or others have placed in our way. But we are called to be Superheroes of Christ's love and truth, sent to share that powerful, supreme love with each other, with our community here in Dorset South & West Circuit, and with the world. God will provide the opportunities for us to kneel down, take out our towel and our basin of water. We have to choose to seize that moment. To share, humbly, the water of love, and the light of life. And we should all be moved by those final few verses, where Jesus declares – 'A new commandment I give unto you, that you should love one another, as I have loved you.'

As Jesus loved his disciples, washed their feet, and sent them out to be Superheroes for the kingdom, transformed by the Holy Spirit, I imagine this: our churches actually hearing the gospel and going out to wash the feet of the homeless, the lonely, the bereaved, the sick, the young family struggling or the older family struggling to be relevant in our fast-paced world. That's the kind of radical, unconditional love God calls each of us to, here in the heart of Dorset South & West Circuit. So we are sent from this place this evening, remembering this poignant moment, in the midst of our Holy Week, but fired up to be Superheroes, of love and service in our community, now and forever.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession: -

Let us pray.

Father, on this night, the night on which he was betrayed, your Son Jesus Christ washed his disciples' feet and said that they ought to wash one another's feet. We commit ourselves to follow his example of love and service. Lord, hear us. **Lord, humble us.**

On this night, Jesus prayed for his disciples to be one. We pray for the unity of your Church . . .
Lord, hear us. **Lord, unite us.**

On this night, Jesus prayed for those who were to believe in him.

We pray for the mission of your Church . . . Lord, hear us. **Lord, renew our zeal.**

On this night, Jesus commanded his disciples to love, but suffered rejection himself. We pray for those who are rejected and unloved . . . Lord, hear us. **Lord, fill us with your love.**

On this night, Jesus reminded his disciples that if the world hated them it first hated him. We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith . . . Lord, hear us. **Lord, increase our faith.**

On this night, Jesus told his disciples that he was going to prepare a place for them. We remember in your presence all who have died . . . and those who have been bereaved . . . Lord, hear us. **Lord, renew our hope and trust in you. Amen**

The Lord's Prayer: -

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn – STF 611 – Brother Sister Let Me Serve You

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

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Blessing:

Having been cleansed by your Spirit and touched by your grace,
We pray a blessing on all of us,
That you would let the love of the Father course through our veins
Let the goodness of Christ pulse through our bodies
And let the power of the spirit flow through our souls.

May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rest, remain and abide with you all, with those you love, and those you are called to love in the name of Christ.

Amen