

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
April 17, 2025

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Greetings

Call to Worship

Leader: A table is set before us

People: A feast is prepared for us

Leader: As we break the bread and share the cup

People: Our understanding may fail us

Leader: But we will never forget Christ's example as one who serves

All: In this time of worship, we remember the full extent of his love. Amen.

Music: An upper room did our Lord prepare (#224, all verses)

Welcome

+ We welcome our brothers and sisters from the congregations of Port Nelson United Church and Brant Hills Presbyterian Church

+ Thank you to the Rev. Dr. Michael Brooks for participating in this service

+ Housling cloths

- Historical information in the bulletin
- Thanks to the team of volunteers who put them in the sanctuary

+ Sacrament of Holy Communion

- Thanks to the Elders for preparing and serving the elements
- Elements will be served to you in your pew by an Elder
- Wait to talk the Element – we will do this together (both for bread and wine)



Prayer of Confession

Rev. Dr. Michael Brooks

Holy and loving God, we gather from near and far longing to feel your presence among us. We long to sit at a table with you and share a meal, just as you did with your beloved disciples. In many ways, the Last Supper was so ordinary – it was a gathering of close friends around a table for a meal. And yet, this was no ordinary meal. This was an extraordinary meal where Jesus showed the world what sacrificial love and servanthood truly looks like.

Lord Jesus, we are stunned at the depth of your love for us. You knew that your hour had come. You knew your enemies. You knew your betrayer. You knew that your friends would deny and abandon you. You knew that the crowds would cry out – Crucify Him! And yet you loved until the end.

Compassionate Redeemer, on this night we confess that we are more like the disciples that we care to admit. We are fickle in our faith and we are in denial about our sinfulness. Like Peter, we often argue with you instead of receiving your wisdom and grace. Like Judas, we are often more interested in a few pieces of silver than serving you. As the Church, we have failed to model your example of love as you love us.

Forgive us for taking your suffering too lightly and receiving your grace too cheaply.

Hear our prayers, O God, in a time of silent confession...

In your mercy, Heavenly Father, pass over our sin. Wash us in the living waters of your forgiveness. Cleanse us with your amazing grace.

O Triune God, as we prepare to hear the story of the Last Supper once again, focus our attention on Christ. Transport us away from the cares and worries of this world and pull us towards Christ's covenant of grace, so freely given. In remembrance of all that you have done for us, we give thanks to you, O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

On this holiest of nights, receive the Good News: just as Christ washed the feet of his disciples, we too have been cleansed from our sin through the blood of the Lamb. Rejoice and be glad: pardon, healing, and salvation are ours through Jesus Christ, our Messiah and King. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. Gracious God, give us the wisdom of your Spirit to understand and receive the depth and breadth of the love that Christ showers upon us. Bless this reading of your Word that we might be transformed by its grace. Amen.

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 13, verses 1-17 and 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 decided that Judas son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus.

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 supper, 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 reclined again, 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, slaves 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.”

Continuing with verses 31-35

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.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Music: Let all mortal flesh keep silent (#542, all verses)

Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

Song of Thanks – Abide with me (#794, verse 1)

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.

Prayer of Dedication

Not written in advance of the service.

Reflection: Setting an Example

My parents have decided to downsize and move to a senior's living community. This week, their house will go up for sale after living there for almost 50 years. Needless to say, it's been 'all hands-on deck' to get the house ready and my sister, myself, and our families have all been involved in this process. Last weekend, a group of us were at their house and after several hours of packing, we started looking through old family photo albums. My father has always been an avid photographer and there are so many pictures that need to be organized!



One of the most common pictures in these albums is of people gathered around my parents' dining room table. In fact, we could probably fill an entire photo album with just this type of picture. These pictures bring back such fond memories and there is no doubt that together, they tell a story – of love and fellowship, of loss and change. They mark the passage of time in a profound way.



It is this experience that has been in my head as I pondered the familiar story of the Last Supper. The Gospel of John – which we have been reading through here at Knox since January – tells the story of the Last Supper very differently than the other Gospels, but in essence, they all start with the same picture...a group of friends gathered around a table to share a meal. But not just any meal – it was the Passover meal. Like our gatherings at Christmas and Easter, the Passover meal was – and continues to be - a

special one within the Jewish faith tradition. This meal, which commemorates God's protection over the Israelites in Egypt, took a lot of time and care to prepare. (see Exodus 12)

According to John's Gospel, Jesus and the disciples were sitting at the table waiting to be served the Passover meal. They could smell the lamb roasting over the fire and hear the women whispering as they made sure that everything was ready



to be served. And in the middle of this meal, Jesus did something unexpected and unconventional. He got up from his seat, took off his outer robe, tied a towel around his waste, got the water and basin, and got down on his knees to wash this disciples' feet. Aside from the fact that the disciples SHOULD have already washed their feet when they arrived, this wasn't exactly a convenient time for him to move AWAY from the Passover meal that was prepared for them! Jesus was totally disrupting the picture that was being developed for the evening's festivities by engaging in this shocking behaviour.

Here was the teacher doing the menial work of a servant.

And truth be told, the disciples didn't deserve this special treatment from their teacher and leader. Over and over again, the disciples continued to be confused about who Jesus was and why he was doing what he was doing. They were unsure if Jesus really was the Messiah and secretly, many of them hoped that he would become the new King who would restore Israel to its former glory and overthrow the Roman Empire. In this picture, we see three disciples...Peter – poor Peter – who rebuked Jesus for touching his feet only to be rebuked himself. And then we see Judas. Judas who stole money from

their coffers. Judas who had already made a deal with the devil. And don't forget that we see John, the writer of this Gospel, who was also present, taking it all in. Did John truly understand what was unfolding before his eyes? Not really because he said so himself throughout his Gospel narrative – we didn't understand everything until after the resurrection. This was the cast of characters who Jesus dined with that evening.

They were doubtful, confused, and hypocritical - and yet, Jesus loved them all.

With this act of service, Jesus offered his disciples cleansing from their sin. He forgave their past sins of doubt and disbelief. And he also forgave their future sins because they would all abandon him soon.

With this act of sacrificial love, Jesus set an example for them – to wash each other's feet. To love one another. Jesus served them with a compassion and humility that is beyond our understanding.

How can anyone love another person that much, especially someone who has hurt you? Betrayed you?

Jesus can. Jesus does. Jesus will.

In the midst of sharing bread and wine with his closest friends, Jesus offered the perfect example of what worshipping and serving God looks like. Little children, he said, 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 13:33-35) As he was preparing to go to the cross, he gave them a job to do – after I am gone, you must love one another. You have to wash the feet of others – even those who doubt and disbelieve. Even those who betray and abandon

the faith. This is the only way that people are going to know who I am really am – Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

In our world that is full of brokenness, heartache, and violence, sharing this message of love is indeed a daunting task for the Church. Within the global Church, millions of Christians are persecuted for their faith in Christ. Other believers – in Myanmar, Syria, and Palestine – are celebrating Holy Week in the midst of ruined cities and churches.¹ And in our secular society, the Church is being pushed to the margins so much so that many people do **not** want our service or our love.

So, how do we do this, Lord? How can we be more like Christ when we are more like the disciples than we care to admit? How do we find the strength to carry on? Christ provides us with the perfect example of how to do this. By loving others as Christ loves us. By humbly serving others in the name of Jesus Christ. And the strength to love is renewed tonight in the sharing of these elements of bread and wine. The strength to serve is renewed tonight by knowing that Christ's table – which by the way, is not like at my parents' dining room which fits 10 people if you push it – is large enough for each one of us. Indeed, Christ welcomes all people to this table and our job is to set an example by inviting others to taste and see that God is good.

Amen.

As we prepare to gather at the table that God has prepared for us, we will now sing our hymn of approach - Twas on that night (#537, verses 1-4)

¹ <https://www.opendoorsus.org/en-US/stories/easter-comes-to-myanmars-christians-finding-hope-amid-ruins/>

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Invitation

Brothers and sisters in Christ –

On this night, we remember that Christ gathered with his disciples to celebrate the Passover meal.

On this night, preparations were made not only for the meal, but for Christ's betrayal and denial.

On this night, Jesus exemplified what it means to be a servant leader.

On this night, Christ poured out himself for the forgiveness of sins.

On this night, we remember how costly love can be.

We gather together for this Sacrament knowing that we will never measure up to Jesus' example. And yet we're here. Sinners and saints alike. I invite you – in the name of Jesus Christ – to come to the vast expanse of this table, just as you are. Come and share in Christ's redeeming grace. Come and experience the transformation of these elements into a love made real.

Come.

The Apostles' Creed

Let us join together and confess our common faith in the words of the Apostle's Creed.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

Was crucified, died and was buried;

He descended to the dead.

On the third day, he rose again;

He ascended into heaven,

He is seated on the right hand of the Father,

And he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church,

The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer

Holy, holy, holy Lord. God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glorious creation! At your Word, all things were made; you formed the vastness of the universe and created all living creatures down to the tiniest microorganism. You molded human beings in your image and have blessed us with lungs that breathe, minds that think, limbs that move, hands that serve, and hearts that love.

Blessed are you, O creating Father!

In the fullness of time, you sent your Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh, to live among us and to be our teacher, friend, and guide. Christ came into this world as a helpless infant. In humility, he ate with sinners and tax collectors; in love, he healed the sick and the blind; in service, he washed the feet of his disciples and then sacrificed his life on the cross.

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!

Nurturing Spirit, since the beginning of time, you have moved among the people of God. You comfort us when all seems lost. You rebuke us when we go astray. You inspire us to love and serve as Christ did. As we gather around this table from different branches of the Global Church, pour out your Spirit upon us that we may become one in the body of Christ. Pour out your Spirit on these gifts of bread and wine, that they may become the body and blood of Christ. May the global Church be blessed during the season of Easter so that the world will experience the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the Spirit of God, full of wisdom and hope!

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty Father, world without end. Amen.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

Beloved in the Lord, attend to the words of the institution of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they are delivered to us by the apostle Paul:

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you,
that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed
took a loaf of bread,
and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said,
"This is my body that is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."
In the same way he took the cup after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

When Jesus shared the bread and wine in this way, he gave new meaning to everyday things. He transformed them into himself so that we can share in his death and resurrection. Whether you are sitting in this sanctuary or are watching online at home, the everyday elements before us have been set apart from all common use and transformed into a holy mystery. But this is not because of anything that we have done – it is only through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Friends, if you are hungry for forgiveness, if you are thirsty for a love that is without end, if you are seeking a table where you feel included – know that you are welcome here.

In the name of Jesus Christ, come and experience the gifts of God for the people of God!

Sharing of the Body and Blood

The body of Christ, broken for you. // The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Prayer

O Triune God, we thank for the feeding of our souls and the renewing of our spirits. On this holiest of nights, we remember that our Lord gave his disciples a new commandment: to love one another as he loved them. Write this commandment on our hearts, and strengthen us in service, in unity and in love for Christ's sake. Amen.

Music: Twas on that night (#537, verses 5-6)

Final Reading - John 13:36-38

Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."

³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times."

Benediction

With the taste of bread and wine on our lips, the time has come to go out into the night to remember just how much Jesus sacrificed for love. Amen.

Please leave the sanctuary in silence.