

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today is Maundy (“Commandment”) Thursday. On the evening of this day, Lent comes to an end and we enter the Three Days of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

In the transition of this day, we remember Christ’s last meal with his disciples, but the central focus is his commandment that we live out the promise embodied in this meal. As Jesus washed his disciples’ feet, so we are called to give and receive love in humble service to one another. It is within this deep, abundant love that we are formed into a new body in Christ, transformed by the mercy we have received, and prepared to carry it into the world in service.

This year, our actions of showing love for one another are themselves transformed. Right now, for most of us, our service of love to one another is best demonstrated and modeled in keeping healthy physical distance. We do this to help relieve the crushing demand placed on so many healthcare workers and to provide time for scientists, epidemiologists, and immunologists to do the vital work of their vocations in developing new vaccines and new options for healing the diseases we experience. Right now, that love looks like wearing masks or sewing masks for others. Right now, that love is provided through phone calls, email messages, and video chats — always in service to the needs of the other.

Serving one another in love – whatever form that best takes – that is Jesus’ call to us this day.

Together in Christ,
Rich

Prepare a Space for Worship

Set out on a table in front of you a bowl of water and a clean towel.

Let Us Be Gathered

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Confession and Forgiveness

Friends in Christ, in this Lenten season we have heard our Lord’s call to struggle against sin, death, and the devil—all that keeps us from loving God and each other. This is the struggle to which we were called at baptism.

Within the community of the church, God never wearies of forgiving sin and giving the peace of reconciliation. Let us confess our sin against God and our neighbor, and enter the celebration of the great Three Days reconciled with God and with one another.

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God,
we confess that we are captive to sin
and cannot free ourselves.
We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us.

Forgive us, renew us, and lead us,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us
even when we were dead in sin,
and made us alive together with Christ.
By grace you have been saved.

In the name of † Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven.
Almighty God strengthen us with power
through the Holy Spirit,
that Christ may live in our hearts through faith.
Amen.

Song

Let us unite in song and music by listening to the Luther College Nordic Choir perform “When We Love.” The song sings of the power of love to transform this weary world. Luther College is located in Iowa and is one of 26 colleges and universities affiliated with the ELCA. Here is the link:
<https://youtu.be/TPb0Dv5nftg>.

As you listen, you are invited to pray the text of the song:

*The towering tree spreads his greening canopy
—A veil between the soil and sky—
Not in selfish vanity,
But the gentle thrush to shade and shelter.
So it is with love.*

*For when we love,
Simply love,
Even as we are loved,
Our weary world can be transformed.*

*The busy thrush builds her nest below
—A fortnight’s work to weave and set—
Not for herself alone,
But her tender brood to shield and cherish.
And so it is with love.*

*For when we love,
Simply love,
Even as we are loved,
Our weary world can be transformed
Into the Kingdom of God!*

Prayer

Let us pray.

Holy God, source of all love,
on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave us a new commandment,
to love one another as he loves us.

Write this commandment in our hearts,
and give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all,

your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Let Us Hear God's Word

A reading from Exodus:

¹The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ²This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it.

¹¹This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance. (Exodus 12)

The Holy Gospel according to John:

¹Now 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. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then 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. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus 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." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹²After 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?" ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

^{31b}"Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little 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.' ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Reflection on the Readings

After supper, Jesus says to his disciples, "Where I am going, you cannot come."

Those words from the gospel reading caught my attention this year in a way they haven't before. In this moment of quarantine (a word that comes to us from an Italian word meaning an isolation period of forty days), it makes me want to respond like this:

"No, duh. Of course we can't go where you are going, Jesus. None of us can go or be where any of us are going. That would break the rules of quarantine and the stay-at-home orders. It would extend this period of illness and cause more suffering."

But that is not Jesus' main point. It is not about where we can or can't go. It's not about whether we will hang on a cross or perform miracles. It's not about whether we will face down the governor or the president with clever words and scriptural quotes that reshape government priorities. It's not about whether we can go into the hell of a tent-based morgue or hospital for three days and then bring back the dead.

No, Jesus' main point is something different. It is about something we can do – love one another.

This love that we can do is not something that exists just in words of affirmation or random acts of kindness. Rather it exists in something intentional, something planned. It is love that invites, listens, and then responds to a need in the context of the day and age in which it exists. It is love that makes sure everyone has enough. It is love that works to prevent and slow the spread of infection. It is love that makes sure our neighbors' feet have been freed from the burdens of the day so they can sleep well and walk new into the next day.

Each time we do these things, we do them with a love that remembers Jesus. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

Let us join in the hymn of the day, "Where Charity and Love Prevail."

Here is the link: <https://youtu.be/62G7-owG91o>

(Choral recording made available through Augsburg Fortress.)

Offering Prayer

Please continue to support our church's ministries during this time. While our activities at our building may be "on pause," the work of our ministries is not. You are welcome to join Amy and me in mailing your offering to our church office at Peace Lutheran Church, 3100 North St Louis Ave, Joplin MO 64801. Please contact the church office at peaceluth@hotmail.com to explore other options for giving.

Let us pray.

God of glory,
receive these gifts and the offering of our lives.
As Jesus was lifted up from the earth,
draw us to your heart in the midst of this world,
that all creation may be brought from bondage to freedom,
from darkness to light, and from death to life;
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to 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, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Song

Let us listen to "Requiem" as sung by the Luther College Cathedral Choir: <https://youtu.be/Seaxh7AHEiQ>
You are invited to listen and pray the words of this hymn:

*Mother Mary, full of grace, awaken.
All our homes are gone, our loved ones taken,
Taken by the sea.*

*Mother Mary, calm our fears, have mercy,
Drowning in a sea of tears, have mercy,
Hear our mournful plea.*

*Our world has been shaken,
We wander our homelands forsaken.*

*In the dark night of the soul
Bring some comfort to us all,
Oh Mother Mary, come and carry, us in your embrace
That our sorrows may be faced.*

*Mary, fill the glass to overflowing,
Illuminate the path where we are going,
Have mercy on us all.*

*In funeral fires burning
Each flame to your mystery, returning.*

*In the dark night of the soul
Your shattered dreamers, make them whole,
Oh Mother Mary, find us where we've fallen out of grace,
Lead us to a higher place.*

*In the dark night of the soul
Our broken hearts you can make whole,
Oh Mother Mary, come and carry us in your embrace,
Let us see your gentle face, Mary.*

Psalm 88

Psalm 88 is the psalm reading that traditionally closes Maundy Thursday worship services as the altar table is stripped. Let us share now in the reading of that psalm.

¹O Lord, my God, my Savior,
by day and night I cry to you.
²Let my prayer enter into your presence;
incline your ear to my lamentation.
³For I am full of trouble;
my life is at the brink of the grave.
⁴I am counted among those who go down to the pit;
I have become like one who has no strength;
⁵lost among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave,
whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand.
⁶You have laid me in the depths of the pit,
in dark places, and in the abyss.
⁷Your anger weighs upon me heavily,
and all your great waves overwhelm me.
⁸You have put my friends far from me; you have made me to be abhorred by them;
I am in prison and cannot get free.
⁹My sight has failed me because of trouble;
Lord, I have called upon you daily; I have stretched out my hands to you.
¹⁰Do you work wonders for the dead?
Will those who have died stand up and give you thanks?
¹¹Will your lovingkindness be declared in the grave,
your faithfulness in the land of destruction?
¹²Will your wonders be known in the dark
or your righteousness in the country where all is forgotten?
¹³But as for me, O Lord, I cry to you for help;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
¹⁴ Lord, why have you rejected me?
Why have you hidden your face from me?
¹⁵Ever since my youth, I have been wretched and at the point of death;
I have borne your terrors and am helpless.
¹⁶Your blazing anger has swept over me;
your terrors have destroyed me;
¹⁷they surround me all day long like a flood;
they encompass me on every side.
¹⁸My friend and my neighbor you have put away from me,
and darkness is my only companion.

The Three Days will continue tomorrow with worship devotions for Good Friday.