

Maundy Thursday 2020

It didn't take long for us to turn one of our downstairs rooms into a temporary broadcasting studio. **From here I have been able to offer worship to God on your behalf as well as pray my own prayers.** Thank you for all the encouraging comments you have sent in. I have never received so many love hearts during one service. You can't – but I can – see them arriving as soon as you've pressed the right keys on FB.

Today 'strange times' of the coronavirus still bite hard with the uncertainty of extending the current restrictions – whatever , we can't be together in church. Normally we travel together through Holy Week but the 'lock down prevents that. Usually, the pace quickens at this point and on the evening of the day before Good Friday we are in church seeing again the washing of feet, re-enacting the Last Supper and then watching the church being emptied of its contents leaving it cold and bare. By the end we are left in no doubt that Good Friday and its desolation are just hours away.

I shall miss these symbols and so need, along with you, to discover other aspects of the events in the Upper Room. Not to fill the emptiness, the glaring absent space, but to transform it. It won't be easy – but in the end it may prove to be the very moment that Holy Week and Easter comes alive in us this year.

The opening verses of our gospel reading may well be the place to start (John 13:1-7)

We start with a surprise! Judas is mentioned in close proximity to the story of the last supper and foot washing. The traitor seems to be given a place that is wholly inappropriate. Yet, I think we've sometimes been too hard on Judas. And I wonder if John, our gospel writer, thinks similarly. He is the only gospel writer who lets Judas off the hook a little by blaming the devil for the act of treachery. Judas reminds us that life is often a messy mix of good and bad. John opens the door for us to see that God's purposes are somehow entwined in our complex world and its current struggles. We are here invited to behold nothing less than the struggle between good and evil.

Then John goes on to remind us that Jesus was fully aware of his life as a sacrificial offering. He had 'come from God and was going to God'. John leads us here to some of the deepest wells of Eucharistic understanding. The Last Supper and the footwashing are clearly inseparable. Our faith has service at its heart. How much do we need to be reminded that the church family and wider community have no choice but to be infused with a sense of selflessness?

Loving others – has been happening for years but maybe it is to be done differently as the future unfolds.

The queen referred to serving others in her recent speech :' Together we are tackling this disease, and I want to reassure you that if we remain united and resolute, then we will overcome it.'

In church speak foot washing and service need to be re formed and re newed as gifts to our world.

This Maundy Thursday it is In our hearts, that the gospel opens up a place of honest reality- we are able to say that we are worried and fearful.

John tells us that Jesus loved his disciples to the end -We have no alternative but to crave that love.

Man of heaven, born to earth
To restore us to your heaven
Here we bow in awe beneath
Your searching eyes, /From your tears comes our joy
From your death our life shall spring
By your resurrection power we shall rise