

Thursday 17 April 2025
Maundy Thursday

Liverpool Parish Church

OT: Exodus 12.1-4, 11-14

NT: I Corinthians 11.23-26

Gp: John 13.1-17, 31b-35

Throughout Lent, I have been reading again Bishop Richard Harries' book, *Hearing God in Poetry* with a poem and reflection for each day and each week on a different theme. There were many voices in their own way expressing their vision and relationship to God. The Jewish poet, Yehuda Amichai in his poem, *And that is your glory*, had this wonderful image of God like a mechanic: *Underneath the world, God lies stretched on his back, always repairing, always things get out of whack.*

I think this is the night when God's long-term plan would be put into action. No more tinkering to try and fix this faulty humanity, no more patching up, replacing dodgy parts. Our woeful situation required a complete overhaul and the plan that began with the birth of the Son at Christmas is now about to be fulfilled.

Jesus Christ, true God and true man, would take upon himself all our sins, all that has separated us from God's original intention to have us rejoice in eternal life with him, all our faults and apathy and rejection. He would take all this upon himself and destroy it with his death on the cross. So that we can be born again, not some old, clapped out banger but as a brand new, shining, top of the range model.

This is the plan but we are called to play our part too, after all we wrecked the vehicle in the first place. So what are we to do? Well, three things are outlined as our contribution.

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.

Jesus begins by giving us a powerful example of serving others by his washing of the apostles' feet. We are not called to lord it over others but if we are to follow in his footsteps, we must live as servants wherever we find ourselves. For John, this is the description of the Last Supper. The other evangelists will recount the Eucharist and the blessing of the bread and wine. But for John, this act of serving is paramount. This is what he wants us to take away from the many epic events of that night.

But of course, the installation of the Eucharist, the commemoration of Christ's sacrifice in the bread and wine as his body and blood is of the utmost importance too. It is a reflection of that first Passover when the Jewish people were set free from slavery in Egypt. It symbolises our rescue from the grip of sin. It is a means of sustenance, the body of the Lamb of God, as the ultimate meal to strengthen us on our journey through this world. It is God's establishment of a New Covenant with humankind. But it has a second meaning, a second requirement for us, linked too to the Jewish keeping of the Passover.

We are called to remember. *Do this in remembrance of me*

Never forget the ultimate sacrifice that was made that we might live. Never take for granted the astounding gift that we have received in exchange for the suffering and death of the one who loves us enough to commit to such pain and torture. Never again let apathy dominate our faith.

Finally, Jesus had these words that night: *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.*

We have had a new covenant and now a new commandment. In the kingdom of God, fulfilment and happiness come not from looking out for our own concerns but by putting others first, by striving to be true to the calling to love as God loves us.

We are to be each other's support and stronghold in a world that is far from perfect. We are to stand out, not as people of great wealth or ability but as people who love, who challenge wrongdoing against others, who abhor injustice, who work for the right for all people to be free to live as God created them to be.

This is the night when Jesus began his final earthly journey, this final lesson in serving, in remembering all that is owed to the Father, in loving humanity with a love stronger than death.

In his poem, *Walking Away*, Cecil Day-Lewis finishes with this:

*Saying what God alone could perfectly show –
How selfhood begins with walking away,
And love is proved in letting go.*

By God's grace, may we too have the strength to walk away and live our lives in complete trust and love of him.

Revd Michelle Montrose