

**Thursday 2 April 2026**  
**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**

Tonight, we gather in the soft hush of a holy evening. Maundy Thursday always feels different from the rest of Holy Week. It's intimate. Close. Almost fragile. The crowds of Palm Sunday have faded. The drama of Good Friday has not yet arrived. Tonight, we are invited into a room small, lamplit, and full of meaning. A small upper room where friends have gathered to share the Passover meal.

The food in the Upper Room during the Last Supper was a Passover Seder meal, featuring unleavened bread and wine as central elements, and as was the tradition accompanied by roasted lamb or goat, bitter herbs. A Passover meal, the tradition since the first Passover meal as depicted in the first of our readings the reading from Exodus. The tradition was something that all the disciples were accustomed to and all of them understood the symbolism, because it was at the centre of their faith and of their religion. The night when families gathered together to remember that first release from captivity in Egypt some 1500 years earlier. But this night was to be different for the final Passover that God brought into being is one that we come this Easter weekend to recall and one that we come to remember every time we share in the Eucharist.

The final release from the captivity of sin that comes not through plagues and catastrophes not with the dramatic, not with the holding back of the Red Sea or the destruction of an enemy's armies not with the shedding of Lambs blood but with the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God. But before the final act of self-giving on the Cross in the evening before the events that we know as Good Friday, Jesus chose the simplest of everyday items and the simplicity of everyday acts to leave for his disciples and for each one of us who claim to follow Jesus 2000 years later. Because in the stillness of the Upper Room in the darkness of that night we are rescued from our captivity with three simple things  
A table, a towel, and a commandment.

Jesus chooses a table not a throne, not a pulpit, not a battlefield, to reveal the depth of God's love. Jesus chose a table, not a table as depicted in Leonardo Da Vinci's famous painting with Jesus sitting upright in the centre but it was likely a very familiar low, U-shaped table (triclinium) around which Jesus and the disciples reclined on cushions or mats, rather than sitting in chairs. This setup was consistent with Roman and Jewish dining customs of the first century. The table is where people share life. It's where stories are told, where laughter happens, where tears fall, where families become families and it is where countless meals will have been shared between Jesus and his disciples a place of normality. And at this table, Jesus breaks bread and says, "This is my body." Jesus lifts a cup and says, "This is my blood." He doesn't give his disciples a theory a set of rules to follow or goals that need to be achieved Jesus gives his disciples, his friends he gives them a meal.

Something you can hold. Taste. Remember.

In a world that often feels abstract and overwhelming, Jesus meets us with something tangible. Grace you can touch. Love you can receive. A reminder that God does not stay distant God sits at the table with us.

Then comes the moment no one expected. The Messiah kneels. The Teacher becomes the servant. God takes the lowest place in the room. He wraps a towel around his waist and washes the feet of his friends, feet that are dusty, tired, imperfect. Feet that will, in a few

hours, run away from him. Peter protests, of course. We often do. It's hard to let someone love us in ways that expose our vulnerability. But Jesus insists. Because this is what love looks like when it is lived, not just spoken. The towel reminds us that holiness is not found in status, but in service. Not in being impressive, but in being available. Not in being strong, but in being willing.

And then Jesus gives the heart of this night its name, its purpose, its challenge. A new commandment I give you: that you love one another as I have loved you. Not "love one another when it's easy." Not "love one another when they deserve it." Not "love one another when you agree." "As I have loved you." Love as Jesus has loved us. Which means love that kneels, love that listens, love that forgives love that costs love that stays, even when others scatter.

This new commandment is not sentimental. It is revolutionary. It is the shape of the cross lived out in daily life.

But Maundy Thursday is also a night of shadows. The room is warm, but betrayal is already moving in the dark. The bread is blessed, but the cross is coming. The disciples sing a hymn, but fear is waiting in the garden. And yet, Jesus goes anyway. Jesus walks into the darkness of the night with love as his only weapon. He walks willingly towards the cross.

Tonight, Jesus invites us to do the same.

To carry the table, the towel, and the commandment into our own lives: to make space for others to serve others without pride to love others without condition. This is the path Jesus walks, and this is the path he invites us to follow. So tonight, as we share bread and cup, as we remember the washing of feet, as later we watch and wait with Christ in the garden, may we hear again the heartbeat of this night: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Many people in our present society believe that their identity is fixed by race, colour, gender, sexuality, career, politics, possessions or wealth. Jesus calls us to have our identities shaped by love. This evening we have heard again the words of Jesus in that upper room the words that fix our identities and rescue us from the captivity of lives focused on human values, the words of our Passover.

May that love shape us. May it challenge us. May it send us into the world as people who carry the light of Christ into every shadow.

**Fr Bill Addy**