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Scripture Study

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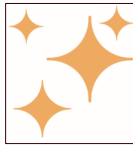


Into the long, deep dark
The descent into the dead
Room to Wonder

Dennis Webster

A weekly reflection based on the teachings at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

Maundy Thursday
Good Friday
The Day of Resurrection



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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

O God, who for our redemption didst
give thine only-begotten Son to the
death of the cross,
and by his glorious resurrection hast
delivered us from the power of our enemy:
Grant us to die daily unto sin,
that we may evermore live with him in the
joy of his resurrection:
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Into the long, deep dark

Exodus 12.1-4 [5-10] 11-14
Psalm 116.1, 10-end
1 Corinthians 11.23-26
John 13.1-17, 31b-35

Maundy Thursday gathers all of Lent at one table. One night. Nothing is extra. The supper is not an addition; it is the centre. Jesus gives it, not as comfort before sorrow, but as the way through it. As we receive, we let its shape form our own tables and our days. We make space for others. We serve without reserve. We seek to nourish, not just to fill. What begins at the altar continues at home, in every relationship. Every deed of giving and receiving becomes a living memory of Christ's love.

“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”

In John's Gospel, love is not only a feeling. It is action. It takes bread, breaks it, and says, This is my body, given for you. The meal is needed because memory will not carry the disciples through what comes next. They need something to hold, something to receive again and again when understanding fades.

The Eucharist is not a reward for the faithful. It is food for those about to scatter. Water is poured over feet that will soon walk away. The water does not erase guilt. It cleanses the body, making space for mercy. We come to the table not because we are perfect, but because grace welcomes us and makes us ready for love.

Peter resists. He is not only humble. He is afraid. To let Jesus wash him, Peter must become vulnerable. He must accept the generosity he cannot repay. Maundy Thursday shows us that we need to be washed before we can follow. Not after.

Then Judas leaves. John is precise: “And it was night.”

Judas does not only leave a room. He steps into the night. Darkness in the Gospel is more than the absence of light. It is confusion, fear, and the urge to control. Judas does not go because he is worse than the others. He goes because he cannot wait. He chooses certainty over love. His leaving shows us that being close to Jesus does not guarantee faith. You can eat the meal and still miss its heart. Yet even for those who struggle or feel far away, the invitation remains. No darkness or doubt can keep us from Christ's welcome. Even in the long night, we are called to return, to receive forgiveness and hope.

And still, Jesus continues.

He calls love a commandment. Not a feeling, rather a practice defined by the

cross itself.

“As I have loved you, so you should love one another.”

This is not a list of rules. This is not a list of rules. It is a pattern, shown in simple acts: washing with water, sharing bread, giving life. Later, in the garden, the disciples cannot stay awake. Their failure is not cruelty. It is human weakness, revealed. It warns us not to trust that we will be stronger tomorrow. Lent teaches us to recognise this.

We see how easily our attention slips. We see how prayer fades when we need it most. In these times, we are called to keep watch, to stay present, even when our strength is small. Let us encourage each other to keep steadfast. Perseverance in faith brings light, even in the deepest night. On Maundy Thursday, Jesus washed his disciples' feet as an act of humility. Now his hands, once used in humble service, are bound. The body is given over.

Bread is held back. Power seems turned upside down. But John will not let us call this a defeat. Jesus is not surprised. He steps forward. I am, he says. Even in the binding, revelation does not stop. The one who binds himself to us will not let go of love.

Looking back over Lent, we see that we have been led here on purpose. We moved from wilderness hunger to living water. From questions in the night to eyes opened in the light. From sealed tombs to crowds with palm branches. Each step narrows the way. Each step takes away our illusions of strength and control. It teaches us to stay with its mystery. Maundy Thursday does not end the story. It opens it wider. The darkness grows. The table is cleared. The altar is bare.

Yet what matters remains: a meal we keep eating, water we keep receiving, love we keep practising even when the way is hidden. We keep this alive by serving a meal to a neighbour, reaching out to someone in need, and listening with patience. We accept water when we let ourselves receive help, admit our need, or pause to pray. In sharing food, forgiving, or letting ourselves be cared for, we keep the table's pattern. In these plain acts, we carry the meaning of this night into the world.

The night is long. Rise. The day is near. Carry this love into the darkness. In your living, become the sign that morning is coming.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you gave yourself before you were taken,
and loved your own to the end.
Grant us grace to receive your life as a gift,
to serve without holding back,
and to stay with you when the night grows deep.
Strengthen us to answer your call,
living with steady love and faithful presence. Amen.

Good Friday

The descent into the dead

Isaiah 52.13 - end of 53

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10.16-25 or Hebrews 4.14-16; 5.7-9

John 18.1 - end of 19

The Passion in John is not set apart from the rest. It gathers every sign, every encounter, every glimpse of Jesus, drawing the whole Gospel into itself. God's light enters the deepest darkness and is not overcome. From the garden to the cross, the story carries all that has come before. The cross is not a sudden tragedy, but the moment when what Jesus has revealed all along stands clear.

This gathering draws our own stories into its light. As Jesus brings everything together, we are invited to bring our struggles, hopes, and questions to the cross. The Passion shapes how we face the darkness, calling us to trust that God's light still enters our lives and is not overcome. Each sign in John's Gospel becomes a promise for daily faith, inviting us to live with bravery and hope, and to notice God at work in our ordinary days.

From the beginning, Jesus resists temptation. In the wilderness and in every step, he refuses spectacle and force. When soldiers come in the night, he does not run. According to the Gospel of John, when Pilate refers to Jesus as a king, Jesus responds, "You say correctly that I am a king," and does not bargain or protest.

Even after his arrest, the revelation continues. The giver of living water does not lose himself once darkness gathers. Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.

Isaiah's Servant Song gives us a key: the servant is lifted up. In John, to be lifted up is not only to suffer, but to reveal glory through obedience. The wounds are not defeat, but calling. The Passion is not the end, but the fullness of Jesus' mission.

Psalm 22 permeates the Passion. It is not only a cry of misery, but a prayer spoken from within abandonment. It begins in desolation and moves toward trust, from solitude to proclamation.

John shapes the cross with the psalm's pattern. Even in anguish, Jesus remains the faithful Son, placing himself in God's hands. In the darkness, he is revealed as the source of light.

The blind man receives more than sight. He becomes a witness. As his eyes are opened, the blindness of those who claim to see is revealed. In the Passion, this pattern deepens. Those who are certain of their vision do not see the truth.

Pilate asks, "What is truth?" while Truth remains silent. Revelation comes not through argument, but through self-giving love.

Jesus reveals himself as living water. He offers the Samaritan woman water that becomes a spring of life. At the cross, this promise does not end. John alone tells of blood and water flowing from his side. The blood speaks of forgiveness and life given for the world. The water points to cleansing, rebirth, and the gift of the Spirit. Even from death, Jesus offers mercy and new life. The living water still flows, even where death seems to win.

The raising of Lazarus points to this moment. Jesus calls him from the tomb and names himself resurrection and life. But the sign is not enough. In the Passion, Jesus does not hold death at a distance. He enters it. He goes down into silence, into the place in which hope seems lost. This is not abandonment, but embrace.

The crowd welcomes a king, but their hope is incomplete. John's Passion shows what kingship truly is: a crown of thorns, a title meant to mock, a reign formed by faithfulness, not by force.

Pilate declares, "Here is your king," and John allows the words to stand. Hebrews explains John's message, especially in Hebrews 4:14-16, where Jesus is described as the great high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses. Jesus, the great high priest, doesn't avoid suffering; he goes through it. He offers himself as a sacrifice, not another. He prays with tears and learns obedience through suffering. He opens a new way through the veil, making God's presence accessible.

The Passion brings revelation to its fullness.

The faithful one resists temptation. The bringer of light does not retreat. The giver of living water pours himself out. The one who opens tombs enters the grave and plants life.

John's Passion does not finish with answers. It leaves us with trust. In the midst of our own questions, we are invited to trust God even while clarity is hard to find. This trust is not passive, but a living hope that God is present and faithful, even in uncertainty.

Jesus bows his head and hands over the Spirit.
The story pauses in silence. Yet all has been given.

Jesus bows his head
and hands over the Spirit.

The light has entered the darkness.

The living water is poured out.
The shepherd lays down his life.

The hour has come.
The work is complete.
The gift is given.

And the darkness has not overcome it.

So we keep watch in the silence.
Not rushing on.
Not turning away.
Trusting that what has been given here
will not be lost,
but held—

and, in God's time,
raised as life
for the world.

The Day of Resurrection

Room for Wonder

Acts 10.34-43
Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3.1-4
Matthew 28.1-10

We have walked a long way to arrive here.

We have walked a long way to arrive here. From wandering in the wilderness to the refreshment at the well, from spiritual blindness to newfound sight, from witnessing the raising of Lazarus to standing in the shadow of the cross—Lent has been a pilgrimage of unveiling.

Not everything is explained,
but everything is brought into the light. Questions and uncertainties are not obstacles here. They are welcome, held gently, and given space to breathe. Faith is not about holding all the answers, but about trusting enough to ask the questions. You are safe here, even in your wondering.

And on Friday, we stood close to the cross.

We watched as Jesus gave himself—
not as spectacle, not as force,
but as love poured out.

Blood and water flowed.
Life given. Life shared.

The light entered the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.

And then—there was silence.

Not failure.

Not absence.

But that strange, sacred stillness settles over everything.

All has been given. No words remain.

Now, early in the morning, we come to the tomb.

And we do not rush to fill it.

The stone is rolled away.

According to the Gospel of John, when Simon Peter entered the tomb,
he found the strips of linen lying there, with the cloth that had covered
Jesus' head still in its place.

What once wrapped the dead body now rests in quiet emptiness.

The grave clothes lie where they fell.

What once held death
now holds silence.

An empty tomb does not demand words.

It invites trust.

It leaves room—

for breath,

for tears,

for wonder.

Mary stands there, not yet comprehending.

The disciples run, and then hesitate.

Nothing is forced.

Nothing is explained too quickly.

Because resurrection is not something we control.

It is something we receive.

And this is where Easter meets us.

Not as a neat conclusion,

not as a solved puzzle,

but as a beginning.

The cross gathers everything—

our wounds, our failures, our questions—

and does not turn away.

And the empty tomb

does not erase those things.

It transforms them. Pain, failure, questions—these are not erased. They
are made new.

Sometimes it means reaching out to someone you once hurt, beginning
again with kindness. Sometimes it is finding the strength to keep going
or choosing forgiveness over bitterness. In the quiet choices of each
day—patience, help, honesty—new life begins to grow.

What was poured out on the cross
is not lost.

The blood—life given in love.

The water—life flowing, cleansing, renewing.

On Friday, it looked like an ending.

Today, we see it as a beginning.

And that beginning is not abstract.

It becomes tangible and real in our lives.

It takes shape.

It takes a name.

Today, the name becomes Paul.

Paul, today we honour your remarkable journey together with the
courage that brought you to this moment. You are seen, valued, and
deeply welcome here.

Paul, you come to the water this morning

not because everything is finished,

but because something has begun.

Not because you have all the answers,

but because you have learned to trust the One who calls you.

Like all of us, your life has had its wilderness,

its questions,

its times of waiting and searching.

But you have also known friendship here—

a community that has walked with you,

laughed with you,

prayed with you.

And now, in this moment,

the story deepens.

Because baptism is not an explanation.

It is an entering in.

Into the death of Christ—

and into his life.
Into the water—leaving behind what is past, stepping into hope.
Into the Spirit—life breathed into promise. As you enter the water and receive the Spirit, may your life be renewed, cleansed, restored.
May love carry you onward.
What flowed from his side on the cross—
blood and water—
is not only a sign to be understood.
It is a life to be shared.
Today, that water touches your life.
Not as a symbol only,
but as a promise.
That you are held. You are not alone. Your community surrounds you,
walking with you, supporting you as you grow in faith and life.
That you are known.
That you are drawn into a life
stronger than death.
And for all of us here, this morning is not just Paul's story—
It is ours.
Because Easter does not belong to the past.
It unfolds here, now—
in lives that are still becoming,
still being shaped,
still learning to trust.
The empty tomb leaves space for that.
Space for those who are certain.
Space for those who are unsure.
Space for those who are weary.
Space for those who are just beginning.
So we do not rush.
We do not rush to explain everything.
We do not rush to certainty.
We stand, like Mary,
in the garden.
We listen for our name.
And slowly, gently,
the risen Christ meets us there.

The stone that sealed the grave—symbolising death's finality— is rolled
away, opening the way to life.
The grave clothes lie where they fell.
What once held death now holds silence. A pause. Space for hope.
Space for new life.
Within that silence, life stirs. Life begins again.
Let it be so.

Questions

At St Peter's on Maundy Thursday, it was said, 'The Eucharist is not a reward for the faithful. It is food for those about to scatter.' What do you think this means, and why might Jesus have given his disciples the meal before they abandoned him?

The sermon mentions that Peter resisted Jesus washing his feet because 'he must accept the generosity he cannot repay.' Why is it sometimes hard to receive help or kindness from others, and what does this teach us about grace?

The sermon explains that Jesus' love wasn't just a feeling but action - he washed feet, shared bread, and gave his life. Pastor St Peter's describes it as 'a pattern, shown in simple acts.'

The sermons talk about how the events of Holy Week transform our pain and questions rather than erasing them, saying 'What was poured out on the cross is not lost.' How does this change the way we might view our struggles and difficult experiences?

The empty tomb is described as leaving 'room for wonder' and says 'resurrection is not something we control. It is something we receive.' What's the difference between trying to control our faith versus receiving it?

Think of a difficult experience or ongoing struggle in your life. Instead of asking God to simply remove it, how might you ask God to transform it or use it for growth and compassion toward others?

End notes and further reading

End notes and further reading

Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew
Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John
Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke
Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians
Andrew McGowan substack.com/@abmcg
N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A
Andrew Pratt, pastor and hymn writer (theworshipcloud.com)

Let your faith and relationships
be shaped by love and patience
for God's love is
revealed in lives, not letters.



Brabarlung Totem

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the First Nations people
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