

## **Maundy Thursday 2013, United Eucharist, St Peter's**

### **1 Corinthians 11**

New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,<sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

### **John 13**

New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, 'You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'

<sup>8</sup> 'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.'

Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.'

<sup>9</sup> 'Then, Lord,' Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!'

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, 'Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.' <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. <sup>13</sup> 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, no servant is

greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

<sup>21</sup> After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, 'Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.'

<sup>22</sup> His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. <sup>23</sup> One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. <sup>24</sup> Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, 'Ask him which one he means.'

<sup>25</sup> Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?'

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup> As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, 'What you are about to do, do quickly.' <sup>28</sup> But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. <sup>29</sup> Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup> As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

<sup>31</sup> When he was gone, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God is glorified in him, <sup>[c]</sup> God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

<sup>33</sup> 'My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: where I am going, you cannot come.

<sup>34</sup> 'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'

<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter asked him, 'Lord, where are you going?'

Jesus replied, 'Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.'

<sup>37</sup> Peter asked, 'Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.'

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus answered, 'Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times!

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It was a family meal He was preparing.

John and I found the man with the water jar

just as the Master said we would  
and he led us to the house where supper was to take place.

We prepared everything just as He instructed,  
and later He and the others arrived.  
By then the evening was drawing on  
and by the time we'd finished supper, darkness had come.

We'd become a family over the years  
and this meal was a family meal, shared together.  
An unlikely family - but a family nonetheless

sharing in the meal that reminded us  
how our ancestors had been rescued from slavery in Egypt.

Later shared meals were to have a more personal significance,  
but we didn't know that - *then*.

We all had things in common.  
Those of us from Galilee tended to be quick-tempered,  
Impulsive, emotional and attracted to adventure,

Perhaps that's why we were so willing  
to give up everything we had and follow Him.

None of us however expected a tax-collector to join our ranks - Matthew was on a nice little  
earner,  
extorting whatever he fancied, whenever he fancied it.  
yet even he couldn't resist the draw of this very special man.

We were a close-knit family, but we didn't always get along.  
Every one of us got fed up with another  
Every now and then

There was Simon and his political ideas;  
I suppose we should be grateful  
he restricted himself to debating!

Then there was Andrew, always bringing others to the Teacher, never seeking the limelight,  
working away in the background

I sometimes find those people difficult - those goody, goodies!  
Thomas of course, was always the pessimist  
and always asking difficult questions,  
I suppose that's the way we learn.

Then there was Judas.  
None of us really got to know Judas, except the Teacher,  
but it later turned out  
that he'd not just been the *keeper* of the purse,  
he'd been helping himself every now and then.

James and John, "sons of thunder", were often arguing.  
Earlier that evening  
I think it was they who caused the heated discussion  
as to who was to be the greatest in the coming kingdom.

Later that very evening though,  
He settled that argument well and truly  
no time for prima-donnas in the Kingdom of Heaven  
"whoever wishes to be first, must become the last"  
And boy, did He have a lesson for us that night!

The Teacher rose from the table.  
You could feel the power as he stood there among us  
Then He took off his outer garment  
and tied a towel around his waist.

Puzzled glances were exchanged and furrowed brows prevailed – what's He up to now?  
What *is* He like?  
And what's he about to do with that water?

I think it fair to say that we were all lost for words  
as he set about performing the most menial of services  
and knelt before us - to wash our feet.  
Our dirty, smelly, dusty feet.

I've never rated feet as the most attractive part of the body  
but at that moment I realised  
how totally unpleasant they really are.

Now I say we were lost for words – well – *nearly* all of us.  
I just couldn't sit there and keep quiet.  
The Teacher began to kneel before me  
me the one who should have knelt before him.

As usual I found myself speaking up  
I'm sorry – I just can't help it,  
I know it gets on everyone's nerves,  
but I was only saying what everyone else was thinking

and daren't say themselves  
My pride wouldn't let me sit there while he knelt.  
My guilt cried out to remind me that I did not deserve this.

He soon stilled my tongue.  
"if I don't wash your feet Peter, you can no longer be part of me"

Well – if having my feet washed meant I could remain his disciple then I wanted more.  
"Wash my hands and my head too Lord, wash all of me!"

I should have known better, He wouldn't be told,  
He always knows best.

He assured me that what he was doing was sufficient,  
He said it so gently and personally,  
and yet with such authority  
it reminded me of that day  
when He told me to leave my fishing nets and follow Him

so I let him wash my feet - and I sat quietly – and received.

as he worked His way around the group,  
I couldn't help wondering - why us?  
Why had we been chosen?

So often while we'd been with him  
there were times when we were afraid,  
or too hasty,  
or lacking in faith

We were all totally inadequate  
And yet He loved us – *all* of us – even Judas

Some of us had wanted power,  
perhaps we all wanted some of the glory if truth be told  
as His little select band of followers.

Yet there He was kneeling before each one of us.  
The Son of God, The Messiah, The Christ  
The teacher stooping down,  
making himself lower than His students  
*cleansing* us.

After he washed my feet,  
it felt as if the whole of my being had been made new.

It was like I'd just stood under a sparkling waterfall  
after a long, hot, dusty journey.

And he reached out to each of us in this way.  
Even to the one who would later leave us for the darkness outside.

It was after Judas had gone into the night  
Jesus explained in part what I later came to understand more fully.

that His glory had been revealed,  
that God's glory had been revealed through Him

and that He'd not be with us much longer  
then he gave us a new commandment  
to love one another.

Well - it wasn't a new commandment,  
it's been part of our law for centuries.  
But there was an addition to the old commandment  
and that was that we were to love one another *as he loved us*.

Obviously, right at that moment,  
we still had no idea to what extent He was prepared to go  
to demonstrate His love for us,  
but we didn't have long to wait

A lot happened that night – and much has happened since  
things that made no sense whilst He was with us, became clear. Things He reveals to us a  
little at a time  
because He knows we could never take it all in,  
He knows we couldn't bear it

“love one another as I have loved you”

That night, He showed us exactly how to do that  
by kneeling before us and washing us clean  
all of us,

not just the chosen few.  
He washed the feet of the one who would deny him three times,  
He washed the feet of the ones who would desert him,  
He washed the feet of those who slept  
whilst he watched and prayed,

He even washed the feet of the one

who would later betray him.

I learned many things that night.

How never to make brash promises

without thinking long and hard.

How important it is to stay awake and remain close to Him.

How not to raise up a sword against your enemy.

But there's one thing I learned that night I will take to my grave

it's all about love

It was a family meal,

and He washed our feet

and he wants us to do the same

to those with whom we share a family meal

and to complete strangers

for we are all one family

and we should all share the same meal together