

E-Series

Maundy/Holy Thursday

12 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 13 So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. 17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me--one who is eating with me." 19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" 20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 21 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." 22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." 23 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. 25 "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." 26 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: "'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." 29 Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." 30 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today--yes, tonight--before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." 31 But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same. **—Mark 14:12-30**

Every day this week, I will be sharing with you some reflections written by my friends James Howell, pastor of Myers Park UMC in Charlotte. He will guide us through this Holy Week.

The word "maundy" derives from the same ancient root as our word "mandate." Jesus issued a mandate: "Do this in remembrance of me." Today, we do.

All of Jesus' meals evidently were memorable. He "ate with sinners" (Luke 15:2) and thereby offended the super pious. He let a woman wash his feet (Luke 7:36) and another anoint him with oil (Mark 14:1). He suggested that when you have a dinner party, don't invite those who can invite you back, but urge the poor, blind, maimed and lame to eat with you (Luke 14:14).

But no meal was more startling than his last. The theological timing was extraordinary. Thursday at sundown was the beginning of [Passover](#), that sacred moment when Jews celebrated God's salvation of Israel from Egypt, remembered by eating lamb, unleavened bread, and drinking wine. Jesus, looking at that bread, saw in it a powerful symbol of what would happen to his body very soon, and staring into the cup of wine, a profound image of his own blood being spilled. We still use the words Jesus spoke when we celebrate the [Lord's Supper](#) now.

Just as God liberated Israel from Egyptian slavery, so Jesus set his friends (and us) free from our bondage to sin, pointlessness, and death. After an awkward, poignant conversation with his friends, Jesus walked out of the walled city of Jerusalem to the [Mount of Olives](#) to pray in the garden called Gethsemane. Kneeling in anguish, Jesus prayed "Not my will, but Your will be done." Was he being fatalistic? Don't we in resignation believe our fate is something we must just bear? But Jesus' mood was not resignation. He actively sought and embraced God's will, which isn't some dark luck, but is when we with trusting faith go where God leads us, no matter the cost.

Jesus was arrested, the charges were trumped up, witnesses were compelled to lie, the proceedings were highly irregular... Who was responsible for Jesus' death? The Jews? The Romans? You and me? The Jews handed him over to the Romans, the Romans handed him back to the Jews, the disciples handed him over. No one wanted to be responsible, and so they (and we!) are all guilty. Through that dark Thursday night in detention, Jesus was abused, mistreated, his fate sealed. Holy Thursday waited all night for the dawn of the day with the paradoxical name: Good Friday.

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Also attached is a map detailing Jesus' movement during Holy Week.