

## **KILMACOLM PARISH CHURCH**

**April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025     Maundy Thursday**

**Theme: “Communion and Holiness”**

**Luke 22:7 + 14-22**

Let us pray,

Lord Jesus,

On this Thursday, the day before your passion, we come to you seeking your presence.

Meet us when we listen to your Word and share bread and wine.

Send your Holy Spirit that all what we hear and all what is being said is Your Word for us.

Amen

Maundy Thursday.

In Germany we call this day, the day before Good Friday, “Gründonnerstag”.

And I must admit, when I did my research about the meaning of “Gründonnerstag” I found many explanations, and none of them were convincing.

So, I am glad that I am here with you and we can discern together what “Maundy Thursday” means.

and - as this is the first time I lead us in the celebration of “Holy Communion” or “Lord’s Supper” here in our Sanctuary -

it is also an appropriate opportunity to reflect on the meaning or better the purpose of this meal which Jesus had with his disciples on the day before his arrest.

By the way, I like the phrase “Holy Communion” – and I will explain to you later why I do so.

So, “Maundy Thursday”.

“Maundy” is derived from the Latin word “mandatum”, which means “Commandment”.

This relates to Jesus’s saying:

“mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos ut et vos diligatis invicem”. [Vulgate Jn 13:34]

And of course, those of you who are fluent in Latin understood immediately that this is Jesus’s famous saying:

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.” [Jn 13:34]

And again, those of you who know the gospel according to John by heart know that Jesus gave this “new commandment” after he had washed his disciples’ feet.

Washing feet is one of the traditions among several Christian denominations to celebrate Maundy Thursday.

Mainly in the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern churches the priest or other senior figures wash the feet of some “ordinary” people.

They do so to show that they are following Jesus’s commandment to serve each other and that no one is more important than some else.

To show as Jesus put it:

“servants are not greater than their master” [Jn 13:16].

Other denominations – particular the reformed ones like our Church of Scotland - have the tradition to celebrate Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday.

Here we follow the other gospels who report that on the day of his betrayal Jesus had a meal with his disciples.

And remarkably, John is the only gospel who does not mention this meal, but instead the washing of the feet.

But this is enough about “Maundy Thursday”, let us spend now some time on “Holy Communion”, and why I think it appropriate to call this what we will do together in a moment “Holy” and “Communion”.

From a friend, a real Scotsman, I learned that in the Scottish tradition, years ago, Holy Communion was celebrated as a “big thing”.

People came together days before the particular Sunday, and there were services and sermons to “prepare” people for “Holy Communion”.

The idea was that this celebration was so “Holy”, that people need to be taught about it.

And importantly people had to repent their sins, to be “cleansed” and “ready” to receive bread and wine – and this too two or three days.

This is also the background why most congregations in our Church of Scotland celebrate Holy Communion “only” three or four times a year.

Well, I personally agree that this sharing of bread and wine is something “special” – you could call it “Holy” – but for other reasons.

When Jesus and his disciples gathered to have the Passover Meal, he said:

“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” [Lk 22:15]

Jesus eagerly desired to be with his friends before he suffered.

At the end of the meal when he took bread he said:

“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” [Lk 22:19]

Jesus eagerly desired to share with his friends before he suffered,

to share an experience,

a meal,

the sharing of bread and wine,

which always will be related to his suffering,

which always will be related to his death.

A meal.

Jesus and his friends share bread and wine; what we call today the “elements”.

He did so after they had a proper meal.

And maybe we miss out on something as we have reduced this meal into “only” to sharing bread and wine.

But we still have bread and wine, real food.

Something tangible,

something we can taste,

something we can chew,

something we can swallow.

Something of “this world”.

And at the same time there is more than the material.

When we eat the bread,

when we drink the wine,  
we remember Jesus's suffering,  
Jesus's death,  
and Jesus's resurrection.

A lot of theologians have tried to explain and to define what "Do this in remembrance of me" means.

And don't expect from me now a definitive answer....

But when we eat and drink,  
when we remember Jesus's death and resurrection,  
there is more than the material consumption and the intellectual consideration.  
It is "Holy Communion".

There are two dimensions in "Holy Communion":

When we share bread and wine we have fellowship with each other.

We not only eat and drink together,

but by doing so we experience a "togetherness" of Christian sisters and brother.

We have latterly "communion" with each other.

And this includes everyone.

When the first Christians gathered in their houses, there were men and women, free and slaves, Jews and pagans, rich and poor,....

And did you notice, when Jesus and his friends gathered, when Jesus gave them bread and wine, Judas was there.

Jesus shared bread and wine with Judas, the person who betrayed him.

Real "communion" means everyone,

whether you have doubts,

whether you have questions,

all what is required that you follow Jesus's invitation to this table.

"Real Togetherness".

And there is “Holiness” in what we are going to do:

When Jesus took the cup and gave it to his friends he said:

“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” [Lk 22:20]

A new covenant.

Long before in Moses times God made a covenant with Abraham, that he will bless his children and children’s children – that they will be God’s chosen people for ever.

A covenant is a legal term – it is a binding contract.

Through Jesus’s “blood”,

through Jesus’s death and resurrection God made a “new covenant”.

A covenant which includes all of us.

And when we follow now Jesus’s example,

follow Jesus’s instruction,

sharing bread and wine,

we join Jesus and his friends at this table on this first Maundy Thursday.

When we share bread and wine, we are in the presence of the Holy God.

“Holiness” and “Togetherness” are united in “Holy Communion”.

I pray that when we now come to this table sharing bread and wine that each one of us can experience true Communion,

true “togetherness” with each other and with God.

I pray that this place becomes for each one of us that place where we can experience the living God, because he eagerly desires to meet us now.

Amen