

³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Today’s readings for your perusal are Exodus 12: 1-14, Psalm 116: 1-2 & 12-19, 1Corinthians 11: 23-26 & John 13: 1-17 & 31b-35.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY – HOLY WEEK - THURSDAY

God gave the Jewish people the Passover because He instructed the Israelites to use the blood of the lamb as a token or sign that they were not to be harmed when God passed over them in the land of ancient Egypt. They had to roast the lamb and share the meat with their neighbours and nothing was to be left and they had to eat unleavened bread because they had to leave in a hurry, so they had no time to prep their food, but by putting the blood of the lamb on their door posts and lintels God would recognise His people under the Old Covenant rules and keep them safe.

12 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbour, ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸ That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. ⁹ Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. ¹⁰ Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it... ¹¹ This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD’s Passover... ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. ... ¹⁴ “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance. You and I live under what is known as the New Covenant unlike the blood scattered on the altar in the temple in Jerusalem to free the people of their sins, and in this case during Passover the blood was put on the door frame and lintels so that God would pass over them and His judgement would not fall on them. This Old Covenant was a temporary fix, but God took on the body of a man and walked the earth, teaching and healing to finally die on a cross of wood as a sacrifice known as the Lamb of God, He came to free us and today commonly known as Maundy Thursday is where we focus on the new covenant, the new Passover festival which we as Christians know as Communion. Jesus’ shed blood on

the cross of calvary is permanent and has been shed to protect us and cleanse us from all sin.

The readings today are all about sacrifice and about the need for forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Like many men and women of faith the psalmist recognises this need: ¹ *I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.* ² *Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.* When we have faith we call upon the Lord knowing He listens to our prayers and this brings us comfort knowing He has heard our cry, our plea, our prayer. Which then leads us on to ask: ¹² *What shall I return to the LORD for all his goodness to me?* ¹³ *I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.* This cup of salvation is the cup that is lifted up at the end of a meal, thanking God for providing for our needs, and we should be doing that each day of our lives, giving Him thanks for providing for all of our needs, physically, emotionally and spiritually. When we recognise that we are then better able to serve Him in our lives and communities. We are precious to Him, that is why Jesus came to bring us back to Him as a living sacrifice, He became the sacrificial Lamb that is why the psalmist says: ¹⁴ *I will fulfil my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.* ¹⁵ *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants.* ¹⁶ *Truly I am your servant, LORD; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains.* ¹⁷ *I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.* ¹⁸ *I will fulfil my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,* ¹⁹ *in the courts of the house of the LORD—in your midst, Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.* What the psalmist is not doing is complaining for if we complain we will get nothing from God, complaining is filled with negativity and is an evil power, whereas giving the sacrifice of thanksgiving is a positive power. If we want God's power to be released in our lives then we must stop complaining and instead be thankful.

Which brings me on to ask a pertinent question for us all to consider today: What do you think about when you receive the Lord's Supper – known as Communion? When you or I next take part in that special meal, for that is what it is, it is a meal where we remember that Jesus' body was broken for you and I and His blood was shed for you and I. We should therefore celebrate that our sins are forgiven us when we eat the bread and drink the wine because we are receiving healing, restoration, and strength from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who purchased all of this for each one of us, you and I, with His body and blood on the cross of Calvary. ²³ *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,* ²⁴ *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."* ²⁵ *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.”²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. We are to do this with thankfulness until He comes again, which will be sooner than you think. Are you prepared? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

As Christians we look towards Jesus always, to guide us and to help us walk with Him in faith and victory. Today is about sacrifice, not just focusing on the blood of Jesus, but also we see that Jesus sacrificed everything about Himself to help us, He the Master, the Teacher, washed His disciples feet. Why should that shock us, does it shock us or do we just skip over this act? Well in Jesus’ time when people came into the house the peoples sandals did not protect their feet from the dirt of the road, and it was up to servants to wash the guests feet, but again Jesus lead by example and turned this upside down, as He did with many worldly teachings. Here today Jesus was telling the Disciples and us today unless we are willing to serve one another, we have no true part in Him or in each other. If we truly are Christians, followers of Christ, and if we love someone, our fellow believers, we will be willing to serve them. This is because in our relationship with Christ, Jesus calls us to sacrifice our self-will, we are not to sit back and expect to be served, that is the way of the selfish, self-centred, self-important people of the world’s view, not the Christians view. We are called to be sensitive to other peoples needs, even in little things so we like our Lord should seek to serve others rather than sitting back and expect to be served, for we also know that there are people in our lives who serve us and look after us in various different ways, so we should therefore treat them with the utmost respect and be good to them, that is why Jesus tells us: *“Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them.*¹³ *“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.*¹⁴ *Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.*¹⁵ *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*¹⁶ *Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.*¹⁷ *Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

PRAYER

Lord Jesus you told us to love one another as you loved us we are to show our love to each other, in this difficult world, this difficult time helps us Lord we pray to show that love to those around us. When we go shopping, let us thank the shop staff who serve us, the security staff who let us in to the shops and all the critical workers that we see around us. We give our thanks today Lord in your Holy Name for blessing us

with the gifts that allow us to serve others in your name. We are grateful and give you our thanks for all that you provide for us in our lives, loving family, dear friends and neighbours. We thank you for all those who work in the care sector, for all the emergency services workers, for all those who keep the infrastructure of our country working. We thank you for food on our tables, clothes on our backs and homes in which to live.

Yet Lord today we pray for healing, for all those who are ill today, heal them we pray, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Strengthen all those who care for the ill, the carers, the doctors and the nurses and for those who provide for them, porters, cleaning staff, catering staff. We pray for strength of faith and for you comfort for all those who have families who are ill or who are in hospital today, and for those who have lost loved ones, we pray and ask that you Lord go to them and surround them with your peace. Let us all who have faith lean on you today, and we ask in Jesus name that people will hear your words and come to you for healing. You Lord came to become our sacrificial Lamb, to free us from sin and the power and fear of death, cleanse us today we pray and help us Lord to pray continually for our people and our world so that all will come to know you and be saved, healed and forgiven.

Help us Lord to give you the sacrifice of our thanksgiving when we eat and drink today, we may not be able to partake in the Lord's Supper in our church buildings but we can do so in our homes and in our hearts always remembering your love for us.

Amen