

Community-Developed

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Date: Good Friday 2016

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Jesus' Farewell Address

A Good Friday Service including Footwashing and Communion

John 13-17

Introduction

This Good Friday service is themed around Jesus' *Farewell Address* in John 13-17. In John's gospel, the night of Jesus' betrayal and arrest includes not only a final meal, but a lengthy final conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Here Jesus shares what is most deeply on his heart as he prepares for his time of suffering and death.

This service intersperses passages from the Farewell Address with music and with the participatory worship rituals of footwashing and communion. It concludes with a telling of the crucifixion narrative in word, song and silence, as well as with a final word of hope from Jesus.

The primary reader in this service is thus the one taking on the voice of Jesus. These readings are indicated in the order of worship with the title "Farewell". Specific references are also offered there. Note that a couple of these "Farewell" readings include short bits of dialogue with Jesus' disciples. These can be skipped over or glossed into the reading to keep the entire script in Jesus' voice.

It makes sense for the Jesus-reader to remain up on the stage for most of the service, as these readings are frequent. A dedicated stool, music stand and microphone for this reader works well. We also found it powerful for this reader to participate as one of the hosts/servers for the footwashing and communion rituals.

A few other roles are necessary as well:

- A worship leader who has some words for introductions, framing and transitions at a few points throughout the service.

- Someone to lead and facilitate the worship rituals
- Reader(s) for the two additional scripture readings, apart from Jesus' farewells.

The same person could fulfill each of these roles, or they can be divided between several people. The specific words we used are included in the Appendix at the end of this document. An asterisk (*) beside the relevant titles indicates these sections in the order of worship. These words may need to be adapted for your own congregational setting (particularly the instructions for the worship rituals).

The one simple chorus not taken from our hymnals is the song *You are the Vine* (used during communion) that is available from the Mennonite Brethren hymnal *Worship Together* (<http://www.commonword.ca/go/571>). This service also includes two special music spots for a choir or small ensemble. Particular pieces are suggested in the order of worship, but these elements can all be adapted to other settings and musical gifts.

Good Friday Service

Farewell

Note:

** Indicates a section with worship words available in the Appendix*

Jesus and His Friends

- Prelude
- Farewell: A New Commandment (John 13:33-35)
- Welcome*
- Hymn: STS 76 – *Prepare a room for me*

The Basin and Towel

- Jesus Washes his Disciples*
- Farewell: An Example (John 13:12b-17, 20)
- We Wash Each Other*
- Hymn: HWB 307 – *Will you let me be your servant*

God in Three Persons

- Scripture: John 13:21-30
- Hymn: STS 81 – *When we are tempted*
- Farewell: The Father's House (John 14:1-11)
- Hymn: HWB 587 – *Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life*
- Farewell: An Advocate (John 14:15-20, 16:7-15)
- Special Music: If ye love me (Tallis)

Supper

- Farewell: The Fruit of the Vine (John 15:1-5, 12-17)
- Introduction to Communion*
- Hymn: Worship Together 221 – *You are the vine*
- Farewell: Peace (John 14:25-31)
(Jesus sits down)

The Cross

- Arrest and Trial of Jesus*
- Hymn: HWB 254 – *Ah, holy Jesus*
- Scripture: John 19:17-30
- Silent Reflection
- Hymn: HWB 252 – *O sacred Head* (verses 1,2, 4)
- Farewell: Joy (John 16: 20-24, 31b-33)
- Special Music – Postlude: Salvation belongeth to our God (Tchesnokov)

APPENDIX

Additional Worship Words

Welcome

In each of the gospels, Jesus spends the final hours before his arrest and trial together with his friends. He gathers those who have been his closest companions and they share supper before the night of his suffering begins. But in the gospel of John, this time of sharing includes a heartfelt conversation in which Jesus pours out all that he wishes to say to his friends before his death. We sometimes call this Jesus' "Farewell Address". His heart is full, and he wants so much to make his friends understand what is happening and what it means. He loves these companions, and he longs to calm their fears, to help them see the bigger picture at work.

On this Good Friday morning, as we remember again the story of Jesus' suffering and death, we will also listen to Jesus' final farewell. We are gathered together here, in this room – friends of Jesus met to eat and share together with our Lord as his time of crisis draws near. A room, a table, a basin and a towel. Jesus has invited us here to say farewell.

Jesus Washes his Disciples

When Jesus and his friends were finally gathered around the table, happy in each other's company even though nervous about what was to come, Jesus did something strange. During supper, he got up from the table. He took off his outer robe and he tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his friends' feet and to wipe them with a towel. This took his friends by surprise. They weren't sure what to make of it. Do they accept this gift from their master? Surely he had no business kneeling to wash

them. Peter, as usual, was the first to speak. When Jesus came to him, Peter said: “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.” Peter was not convinced. He looked at Jesus and said, “You will never wash my feet.” But Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, Simon Peter, you have no share with me.” Well, Peter quickly changed his tune. “In that case, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!”

And so Jesus washed his disciples’ feet. One, and then the next, and then the next. Kneeling on the ground before gnarled and dusty feet that had been following him one step after another for the past few years. Teacher and students, master and disciples, friend among friends – taking up the basin and the towel until all had been washed. And then Jesus put on his robe and returned to the table.

Jesus Washes Us

Jesus washes his disciples, and then he tells them: if I have washed your feet, so ought you to wash one another’s feet. This morning we will heed Jesus’ instruction, taking up the basin and the towel so that we might be washed and also have a share with him. You are invited to participate in either footwashing or handwashing, as you feel comfortable. Some of us have participated many times in this kind of a worship ritual. For others, it may be a new experience and you are encouraged to enter with openness to what may feel strange, but also powerful in its enactment of Christ’s gift of love.

A number of stations are set up around this room, each with space for about 10 people. Each station will have a few groups that gather around it through this time, one after the other. There is footwashing for women by the piano, as well as in the library; footwashing for men on your far right and for men and women together at the station beside. There are also three handwashing stations – two at the front and one in the back corner. As you wash the hands or feet of your neighbour, do so with an attitude of love and humility, trusting that our acts of mercy and kindness will come full circle. So, you are invited to wash the person to your left. They will wash the person to their left, and it will continue around the circle until all have had the opportunity to wash and be washed. Each footwashing station has several basins so that the washing can start at a few different points around the circle.

As we prepare our hearts and hands to receive from Christ and follow his example, we’ll join together in singing from our blue hymnals number 307: *Will you let me be your servant*.

Hymn: HWB 307 – *Will you let me be your servant*

Come, let’s gather around the basin and the towel.

(Come forward to washing stations)

Introduction to Communion

Jesus said his farewells to his friends around the table at supper. They ate together as they had done many times before. There was so much that Jesus wanted to tell them, but sometimes words just aren't enough. Jesus wanted them to feel his deep love for them, he wanted them to taste both the bitterness and the nourishment of his body breaking – the bread of life offered to us. And Jesus wanted them to understand in the deepest places of their being what it meant to be one with him as he was one with his Father. I am the vine, you are the branches. Live in me as I live in you. And it's in that deep common life that the fruit of the vine is produced. Fruit that nourishes and gives life and hope to the world. Fruit that is crushed and poured out into the cup that we now share.

As we prepare to join in this supper that Jesus shared with his friends, we're going to sing a simple refrain together called *You are the vine*. The men's ensemble is going to lead us. They'll sing the whole thing through once, and then invite us to join in on the chorus. You'll find the words printed in your bulletins: *You are the vine, we are the branches. Keep us abiding in you.*

Hymn: Worship Together 221 – *You are the vine*

Sharing of Bread and Cup

This morning we will be served in our pews. The servers will bring the bread to you first. Please stand as your server approaches if you wish to receive, and remain standing until all have been served. The servers will have a gluten-free option as well, so please indicate to your server if that's what you'd prefer to receive. Once everyone has been served we will eat together. We will do the same with the cup – be served in the pews and then drink all together.

On that night when Jesus gathered with his friends before he was betrayed, he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Please join me in prayer.

O God of wondrous love, made known in the fruit of the vine and the work of our hands: thank you for inviting us to this table as friends. Thank you for this feast of love, full of mystery and yet full of gifts we can feel and taste. You are the vine and we are the branches. May this meal keep us abiding in you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The servers can come forward as we share this meal together.

Arrest and Trial of Jesus

Jesus rises, and together with his disciples leaves this upper room where they have eaten and spoken and shared with each other. The Farewell is almost complete. He walks with his friends to a garden where Judas, so recently in their company, has assembled a detachment of soldiers to take Jesus into custody. The soldiers arrest Jesus and take him away. And his friends are left alone. Left to grieve and to watch from afar, left to wrestle their own demons, left to turn over in their hearts and minds all that Jesus had said and done and to wonder at its meaning.

Jesus himself is questioned and put on trial. First before the Jewish High Priest, and then before the Roman Governor. They cannot find much to incriminate him, but still his accusers call for his death. This man, they say, claims to be the King of the Jews, and the very Son of God. Looking for a way out, the Governor offers the people the release of a prisoner as was the tradition of the Passover Festival. Would they want freedom for this man Jesus who has been accused? But the gathered crowds shout no – they'd rather release Barabbas, the criminal. So the Governor has Jesus whipped and beaten. Soldiers press a crown of thorns upon his head and dress him in a purple robe. Is this enough, Pilate asks? Here is your humiliated king. But the people keep shouting, only louder now, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

And so finally Jesus is handed over to be killed on a cross.