

To say that something is Holy is to say that it is different out of the ordinary, that it's sacred. Frederick Buechner says that only God is Holy, just as only people are human. To speak of anything else as holy is to say that it has something of God's mark on it. Times and places and people can be holy, and when they are, they're usually not hard to recognize.

Holy Week, this is a week that clearly has God's mark upon it, and we see it and feel it and we experience it at every turn in the road. It's special, it's set apart, and not just because we find ourselves thinking about it during a time of a pandemic. It's not an everyday thing that we wonder about God becoming incarnate, and coming to earth to be with us; it's not an everyday thing to wonder and reflect upon our own sin, and Jesus (God in human flesh) dying for our sins. It's not something we blithely throw into conversation like the Colts, the weather, or how you should fertilize roses. But ultimately it is the Holy that gives meaning to everything else.

**When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>21</sup> And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." <sup>22</sup> And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" <sup>23</sup> He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. <sup>24</sup> The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." <sup>25</sup> Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."**

**Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the<sup>[a]</sup> covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.**

In the midst of knowing--more than any other--what was about to happen, the chaos that was about to ensue, Jesus calmly share a meal. Knowing that the end was upon him, instead of feverishly trying to get across more and more of his teaching; instead of plotting an escape; instead of working on his defense case to present to the authorities Jesus reclines at table and shares a meal with his friends.

I saw this image this week and I thought it was really good, it's a depiction of Da Vinci's Last Supper translated into what it might look like in the age of Corona. How many of us have become well acquainted with this image of a Zoom call.

But if you look at the faces of the disciples as Jesus has just informed them what is about to happen they are beginning to panic, they're turning to one another in confusion, murmuring, and wondering if what he is saying could actually be true. But in the midst of it all, the calm at the center, the eye of the storm is Jesus. Hands out in a gesture of hospitality, or perhaps welcome, or perhaps a gesture indicating that his life will be poured out for them.

In the middle of what will become an excruciatingly 24 hours Jesus is calmly drawing his followers back to the truth of his sovereignty, in the form of a meal. Of bread and wine that will signify his body and blood given for them, for their sake and for the sake of the world. What is about to happen Jesus enters into knowingly, in complete control, and with loving resolve. This will be his final moment, the God-man's great expression of love and faithfulness, and Jesus begins the events that will follow and lead to his own death by orienting his followers with a meal.

In times of crisis, when things around us are reaching the height of anxiety and confusion and chaos we need something that can ground us, something that draws our attention back to the knowledge of what is true and good. When madness is all around us, when what we can see is only bad news, we need an axis point that reminds us that we are loved, we are forgiven, we are secure in God's purposes for our lives. Jesus promises to be with them in this meal.

Jesus shared a meal and he washed their feet. Other gospel accounts highlight this moment in the middle of a Jewish meal—the Passover meal that remembered and celebrated God's rescue of his people from slavery in Egypt. Somewhere in the middle of the meal there came a moment when Jesus, stood up as the host, wrapped a towel around his waist, then knelt down and began to wash their feet. The sovereign master and teacher who is at the center of this moment with authority, turns and becomes a servant of his friends.

Whenever a follower of Jesus is tempted to power or status or to snobbery of place, we hear Jesus say the son of God stooped low to serve: "love one another as I have loved you."

As Jesus gathered on his last night he called them to this new reality, he called them to this transcendent love that exists even in the midst of chaos. Love one another, as I have loved you. Jesus on his last night shared a meal, washed their feet, and he prayed for them. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them—even as they are living in the real world. A world of war and persecution, famine and hunger, and pandemics. Even as they are living in the midst of the chaos don't let the evil one rob them of their faith, don't let temptation or selfishness triumph over them. I pray these things for my kids, and I pray it for us, that we would not be removed from the mess of the world, but that we would be protected in the midst of it, so that we can bear witness to the one who is over it.

In the midst of the most foreboding time imaginable, it is humbling that we are called to pray pray, but not only that we are told that Jesus in the midst of his agony prays for us. Everything Jesus did in these last days of his life were for the sake of others, were in consideration of others, to serve others, to draw others to himself, and tonight those others are in the homes next to you, across from you, behind you. Even though we cannot be present with one another in this time, we can be present to one another as we pray, pray, pray.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed...