**Reflections for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday**

**Maundy Thursday**

So, we begin our Easter weekend with a meal – a celebration of release from slavery – with an act of slavery. It was the role of the slave to wash the guest’s feet before a meal and Jesus took on this role as he washed his disciples’ feet before sharing a meal with them.

And so we receive some of the most powerful words in our faith – “this is my body, this is my blood”. With hindsight we can see what Jesus meant by those words, but to have been present at the original meal must have been incredible. Jesus goes further, as he is willing to share his final meal with one who would betray him, one who would deny him and others who would run away.

The evening does not end there, however. Jesus’ predictions come true, as, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he is arrested when Judas identifies him, and denied by Peter while he stands trial.

But let’s rewind a minute. For me, the hope of Easter is not just found on Easter Sunday with the Resurrection. It is found on Maundy Thursday, in the Garden, when Jesus asks for this cup to be taken away. If he can doubt and ask for an alternative path, then there is hope for us all. For he took the harder route, giving us the confidence to do the same.

So whether we share a meal as a family, or online with others, when we break the bread, let us have hope in that act of sharing, that we are part of something bigger, an act that encompasses the whole world as one in Christ.

**Good Friday**

Have you ever felt so very alone? Have you ever felt that everyone has abandoned you and you are left to face your difficulties on your own? Particularly relevant at the moment when we are unable to see our family, our friends, our support network. This is how Jesus felt, when he quotes the Psalmist (Psalm 22) “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

Having been “tried” in court, having been flogged, beaten, mocked, Jesus is forced, as others, to carry his own cross. If we follow the Stations of the Cross, we see the people he met on his journey – the women of Jerusalem, his mother, Simon of Cyrene. We hear that he falls, he prays, he speaks to those he meets on his way to his death.

We avoid the graphic images of what happened next – too terrible to show in art, film, representation in whatever its form (with the exception possibly of Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ”). But whether we take comfort in the images of a Christ on the cross with a single trickle of blood on his head from the crown of thorns, or face the graphic image in the above film, we know that this was not an easy death. Nor was it specifically reserved for Jesus. But his death had a specific purpose and a meaning that was to continue long after the event.

Good Friday may not seem like a “good” day, made harder particularly if the sun is shining. But it is a day to pause and reflect on what Jesus’ death means to us personally, as a church, as a people of faith. Unless we can plunge the depths of Good Friday in whatever way we can bear, we cannot fully celebrate the events that follow.

**Saturday**

No-one was able to go to the tomb as it was the Sabbath. While we watch and wait, let us pause and reflect on the events of Holy Week, and the impact that recent events have had on our lives. We have been forced to stop and rethink our way of living, so let us take the opportunity to rethink our faith, that we may emerge stronger, yet changed forever.

**Easter Sunday**

**Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Happy Easter!**

Not quite the Easter we were planning, but Easter nonetheless. We are living in different times where extraordinary acts of kindness are being carried out all over the world. Strangers are becoming friends (from a distance) and we are all in this together.

We don’t know for how long this is going to carry on, but what we can be sure of is that there will be an end to it. How we use our time in the meantime is up to us. But what is important to remember is that, at the moment, we have time. Time to reflect; time to speak to each other on the telephone or online, without the “oh I must go I’ve got to be at….” We have time to relax in our own gardens or spend time with family (physically in the same house or “virtually” via Skype/Zoom/Facetime).

Let us make time for God in all this. We plan our shopping, we plan our communication with each other, but let us not forget God. He is in all of this, walking alongside us, holding us close, keeping his arms around us as we face each day. Despite everything going on there is still much to be thankful for and we need to share that with God, as well as our concerns.

On this Easter Sunday, let us remember – on that first Easter Sunday, the disciples were in a locked room, afraid, and Jesus came in to them and said “Peace”. We may be in “lock down” in our own houses, quite probably afraid, but Jesus can still come in to us and bring us his Peace.

So, whether we put flowers in our windows, sing our Alleluia’s online or out the door, let us Celebrate the Resurrection – for Jesus is Alive!

Happy Easter!

Rev Ruth