

In preparation for this reflection, collect your Bible, a bowl and a jug filled with water to use when instructed – water will be poured into the bowl three times. When there is only one person, read slowly and meditatively; when there is more than one person, share or alternate the reading, again, slowly and meditatively. This reflection could take 20-30 minutes, so, please, don't hurry.

Let us Pray

Sacred Silence: filled.
Holy Moment: overflowing.
Haunting Seconds: brimming.

Tonight, too much happens in the holy story to comprehend.
Too much fear and deceit.

Heaven is teetering.
The basin is waiting.
The action is joined.
The Holy one of God moves.

The darkness encroaches.
The light crumbles.
Bread breaks, and wine spills.

Sacred Silence: filled.
Holy Moment: overflowing.
Haunting Seconds: brimming.

A questioning promise, a broken covenant, a wondering band of followers, a worried Messiah.
Won't you wait here a while?
Won't you wait here a while?
Long enough, long enough, to grasp a glimpse, and hold a fraction,
of a broken heaven.

(Silence)

Reading

In your Bible, read aloud John 13:1-17, 31b-35.

Footwashing

Pour some water into a bowl.



Jesus didn't explain what he was doing. He just stood up from the table, got a towel and a basin, and started to wash the disciples' feet: Peter's, Andrew's, even Judas' feet. Jesus never left anyone out.

Peter felt uncomfortable, telling Jesus, "You will never wash my feet." When Jesus told him that was part of being a disciple, Peter changed his mind, "then wash my hands and my head and every part of me!" But Jesus told him that this foot-washing was not about taking a bath. "Even you will deny me," he told Peter. And still he washed Peter's feet.

Then Jesus started to talk: ‘This is what it means to be your teacher.’ He told them. ‘You must follow my example and wash one another’s feet, too. This is a new commandment that I am giving: You should love one another as I have loved you.’

Jesus said, ‘I will only be with you a little while longer. Where I am going, you cannot come. So, remember the commandment I am giving you. Love one another.’

A prayer

Servant God. Kneeling. Bending. Serving us.
Take our dusty journeys and wrap your hands around them.
Every path we have trodden in life.
Every word that has taken us to hurtful locations.
Every thought that has moved us into rough places.
Wash away the pain, as we confess, and you forgive.

During a moment of silence, pour some more water into the bowl.

We pray

Take the wounds of our travelling and hold them in your healing hands.
As we dip our hands in the water, we pray for each person suffering in our world today at this time.
We pray for every journey of remembrance that holds too many memories.
We pray for every burden we carry that weighs us with anger we cannot let go.
We pray for every place we have visited that holds too much pain.
Wash away the lingering, and we let go, and let you heal.

During a moment of silence, pour some more water into the bowl.

Take the discomfort of our values, and wash and wipe and cleanse as you serve us; every lesson about love we have not learned, every value we have not yet grasped, every truth of your realm we have ignored.
Wash away the hesitation, as we accept your love, and offer our love to you.

During a moment of silence, pour some more water into the bowl.

Jesus says: ‘Come you who are weary, you who are heavy laden.
Come and let my hands refresh your living.
Let me be your servant, and witness heaven on earth.’

Sharing the meal

Footsteps could be heard running through the streets towards Caiaphas’s lodging, but few heard them as bitter herbs, radish and celery were eaten.

Soldier’s sandals sounded as they marched the alleyways out of the city as they always did, in tens, but this time with a purpose that was different. No one’s attention was drawn to them as roast lamb with slices of garlic was cut making the Passover Feast.

At one table, a betrayer was accused. A holy man and his followers faced each other denying and blaming the other. Only two of them knew who had done it and one of them was soon to leave under the noise of shouting.

He would walk the cobbled street under the moonlight, passing menorahs in each window, slithering through wafts of roast lamb and turmeric and coriander towards a secret meeting place among the trees and shadows. But not yet.

Round the table in an upper room voices fell silent and Jesus took the unleavened bread, with a face drawn and tired looking at each other, foreheads furrowed. “Take it and eat it, all of you,” he said.

Twigs snapped under the trees. The high priest’s door shut. Footsteps went scurrying.

And as they ate a piece each, chewing over silent questions, Jesus took the cup of wine that every Passover meal requires and stared into it. “This is my blood, the sign of the new covenant. Drink from it, all of you,” he said.

And as whispers were heard around the city and religious leaders moved by stealth to the meeting place, they did drink – all of them.

If they had listened maybe they would have heard what was happening in heaven and in the streets. But their ears were filled with the back and forth of questions and silence. The world was turning against them, and only one person in that room could hear it.

Here is that bread, broken. Here is that wine, poured out.

Betrayal

Love has moved out.
The room is silent.

Suddenly, the wind changes direction.
Silence sinks.
There is a cry somewhere in the city.
And a kiss is traced on a carpenter’s cheek.
It is the moment of betrayal.
The night has truly arrived.

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