

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST – CONGREGATIONAL
440 West Lanikaula Street, Hilo, Hawai`i
Maundy Thursday, April 9, 2020

Rev. Eric S. Anderson, Pastor

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD

Welcome

Rev. Eric S. Anderson

Call to Worship

Leader: After God delivered the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt, they determined to remember. They set a day of remembrance, they set a time of festival. For generations they have observed it as they were told to do, “a perpetual ordinance.” Tonight we recall a night of that remembrance, a night on which Jesus celebrated that ancient deliverance and wrought a new redemption in faithfulness. Tonight is the night to remember. Tonight is the night to give thanks. Tonight is the night to venture into the shadows and wonder, wonder at the faithfulness that led Jesus through the night of suffering and the nights in the grave to the wonder of resurrection sunrise. Come and worship.

Prayer of Confession

Let us pray:

Holy One, you have given us your ear all our lives. You have heard the cries of your people in our generation, in our parents’ generation, and in all the generations since first your image walked the Earth. Hear us tonight as we raise the cup of salvation and call upon your name. Hear us as we offer our confessions on this night. We have trusted ourselves more than you. We have given heed to our fears or our fantasies more than to you. We have let that misplaced trust mislead us into acts that harmed ourselves, our neighbors, and our relationship with you. Forgive us, Holy One, as Jesus promised you do. Forgive us as we come to you in prayer.

[Time of silence]

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Jesus came not to condemn, but to forgive. Jesus came not to break us, but to make us whole. Jesus came not that we would die, but that everyone should live. Give thanks, friends. In the name of Jesus Christ I say to you: your sins are forgiven.

Holy Communion

Leader: We come now to a celebration of our Maundy Thursday communion meal. Take this moment to have your bread and drink at your side. Take this moment to breathe in the Holy Spirit of God.

Leader: Jesus summoned his closest friends to celebrate the ancient liberation of their people. They gathered to dine and to pray. They gathered as the evening's shadows fell. So let us dine and pray.

All: God of abundant love, come to us in all the places where we are. On our tables we have bread; on our tables we have drink. As the light of sunset fades, we ask for nourishment to replenish the lights of our spirits. As we remember the deep sadness of Jesus' Thursday night, may we be sustained in body, mind, and soul to make the journey with him. Feed us at this meal, O God, for the troubled times and the glories that are to come. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Leader: We remember that on the night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread. He blessed it and then he broke it, saying, "This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

May God fill you as you eat this broken bread.

We remember also that after supper, Jesus took the cup. He blessed it and then he shared it with his disciples, saying, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink of it in remembrance of me."

May God fill you to overflowing as you drink this cup.

Let us pray:

All: We thank you, God, for nourishing us in this solemn and splendid meal. May we endure the struggles of our days in faithfulness and assurance. May we come to the day of resurrection in hope and in peace. Amen.

Reflection: Into the Shadows

The evening began well for Jesus and his disciples, that is, for his closest companions and most steadfast friends, the twelve people who represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Before the meal even began, however, Jesus' awareness of the night's tragic course emerged. Suddenly he told

them that before the night was over, one of them would betray him. They could hardly believe what he said. “Surely not I, Lord?” they protested, one after another. “Judas, who betrayed him, said, ‘Sure not I, Rabbi?’ [Jesus] replied, ‘You have said so.’”

(Candle of Betrayal extinguished)

Jesus went on to say that they would all desert him that very night, that with the shepherd struck the sheep would flee. They protested once more, and Peter declared his willingness to die with him. But no, said Jesus. “Truly I tell you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” Peter and all of the disciples said once more that they would never abandon him.

(Candle of Desertion extinguished)

From there, they went to the Mount of Olives for a time of prayer. Jesus walked apart from his friends to raise his impassioned plea to God: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.”

(Candle of the Agony of the Soul extinguished)

Jesus had invited Peter, James, and John to pray together. They were closest to him as he grieved and wept and asked God for relief that would not come. He counted on their prayers. He counted on the love they held for him. But when he returned, he found them asleep, not once but three times. “The spirit indeed is willing,” he grieved, “but the flesh is weak.”

(Candle of the Unshared Vigil extinguished)

Earlier, after the supper, Jesus had prayed in awareness that the hour had come. “Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you,” he asked. But of those who heard his prayer, only two – Jesus himself and the God to whom he prayed - understood that he would find his hour and his glory in a shameful death upon a cross. His friends did not, could not understand.

(Candle of the Hour Has Come extinguished)

Jesus went on to pray for his disciples. He knew that they would be scattered, so he also knew that they must be strengthened afterward. “I ask you to protect them from the evil one,” he prayed, and “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.” On that night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus prayed for all who had and all who would come to follow him. Jesus prayed for us. Let us, divided as we are, be one in the hope of Jesus’ prayer for our unity.

(Candle of That They May All Be One extinguished)

In the garden, his prayers completed, Jesus turned his eyes to the garden's entrance. He saw lanterns and torches flaring. He saw the light reflecting from the steel of soldiers' armor and weapons. "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus replied, 'I am he.'" Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them."

(Candle of the Arrest in the Garden extinguished)

Jesus spent the rest of the night before councilors and priests and a Roman governor. They charged him with blasphemy. They charged him with apostasy. They condemned him for rebellion. They put him in the hands of the Pontius Pilate's guard. "And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him."

(Candle of the Shadow of the Cross extinguished)

The Word Was God (John 1:1-4, 14, 10, 12, 3:19 paraphrased)

Before the world was created,
the Word already existed;
the Word was with God,
and the Word was the same as God.
From the beginning the Word was with God.
Through the Word
God made all things;
not one thing in all creation was made without the Word.
The Word was the source of life,
and this life brought light to humanity.

The Word became a human being
and, full of grace and truth,
lived among us.

The Word was in the world;
and though God made the world through the Word,
the world did not recognize the Word.
Some, however, did receive the Word
and believed in the Word.
So the Word gave them the right
to become God's children.

This is how the judgment works:
The light has come into the world,
but people love the darkness rather than the light,
because their deeds are evil.

The Darkness

Song: Were You There?—African-American spiritual arr. Joyce Finch Johnson

Eric Anderson

Doug Albertson

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

This is the night of the shadows. Let the light of Christ glimmer in your hearts. It will brighten to a stunning brilliance in the coming days by God's grace. Amen.