

# THE WAY OF JESUS IN A WOUNDED WORLD: A PILGRIMAGE OF FAITHFUL LOVE

Maundy Thursday Worship  
April 2, 2026

## Welcome:

Tonight we remember the night before the cross.

Jesus gathers his disciples at the table. He washes their feet. He gives them bread and wine. And he gives them a command that will define their witness for every generation:       *“Love one another as I have loved you.”*

This night reveals the heart of the kingdom of God. In a world shaped by domination and fear, Jesus kneels. In a world that divides people into enemies and strangers, Jesus breaks bread with all.

In a world that trusts power and violence, *Jesus chooses humility, truth, and sacrificial love.*

The way of Jesus stands in sharp contrast to the forces that would our world.

*Too often cruelty is justified.*

*Too often truth is distorted.*

*Too often fear is used to divide neighbor from neighbor.*

Yet followers of Jesus are called to another way.

We refuse to baptize domination. We refuse to sanctify cruelty. We refuse to confuse worldly power with the authority of Christ.

Instead, we return again to the teachings of Jesus.

*To love our neighbors without exception.*

*To protect the dignity of every person, for all are made in the image of God.*

*To stand with those who are vulnerable.*

*To speak truth and pursue peace.*

Tonight we walk slowly through the story of this sacred night.

We will move from the table ...

to the basin and towel ...

to the garden of prayer.

As we walk, we ask the Holy Spirit to form us again as disciples – a people who live in the way of Jesus in a wounded world.

May Christ meet us in this journey. And may our lives become a living witness to the love we remember tonight.

### Grounding Ourselves:

Settle comfortably in your chair. Feel your feet supported by the floor. Let your shoulders soften.

Take a slow breath in. And a longer breath out.

Notice the present moment – the sounds around you, the rhythm of your breath, the quiet presence of God.

Pray softly: *“Jesus, help me walk with you tonight.”*

Remain with that prayer for several breaths.

## **MOVEMENT I**

### **Abiding in Belonging: The Table of Christ**

Luke 22:19 – “This is my body, given for you.”

#### Reflection:

Jesus gathers his disciples around a table. They come carrying uncertainty, fear, ambition, and confusion.

One will betray him.

Another will deny him.

All will abandon him.

Yet Jesus still breaks the bread.

Grace creates belonging before we deserve it.

In a divided world where many are excluded or forgotten, Christ continues to form a community at the table.

Here we remember that the love of Christ has no exceptions. No nation, no race, no stranger lies beyond the reach of God’s grace.

Tonight we come as we are – welcomed, forgiven, and invited into the life of Christ.

### Embodied Practice:

Place one hand over your heart. Notice your breathing.

Ask yourself gently: Where do I feel welcomed by Christ?

Where do I struggle to believe I belong?

Offer this quiet prayer: Lord, help me receive the grace of Your table.

### Great Thanksgiving:

The Lord be with you. / **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. / **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. / **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere, to give thanks to You, O God.

You created every person in Your image and breathed Your Spirit into humanity.

You formed a people to reflect Your justice and mercy in the world. When we turned away from Your ways, You did not abandon us. Instead, you sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to show us the way of faithful love.

He welcomed the stranger, healed the wounded, and lifted the dignity of those the world had forgotten.

Through him, we see the heart of Your kingdom – a community where neighbors are loved, truth is honored, and every person is treated as beloved.

And so with Your people in every time and place, we join our voices in praise:

### People:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,**

**God of power and might:**

**heaven and earth are full of Your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

### Words of Institution

On the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus Christ took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is given for you. Eat this bread, all of you, in remembrance of me.”

In the same way, he took the cup also, after supper, giving thanks and 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 we eat this bread and share this cup, we proclaim our Lord’s saving love until he comes.

People:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Leader:

Holy Spirit, come.

Bless this bread and this cup. Make them for us the body and blood of Christ. And make us one with Christ, with one another, and one in ministry to the world.

Form us into a people who embody the way of Jesus – a people who love our neighbors without exception, who seek justice and peace, and who protect the dignity of every person.

Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are Yours, Holy God, now and forever.

People:

**Amen.**

The Bread and Cup are Shared

(\_\_\_\_\_ and Kathy serve the congregation from the common loaf and cup.)

Prayer after Communion:

God of grace, You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us at the table of Christ.

Send us now into the world to walk the way of Jesus. Give us courage to love without fear, to serve with humility, and to remain faithful in hope.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn

Bread of Life from Heaven, v. 3-4

GG #497

*Refrain: Bread of life from heaven, your blood and body given,  
we eat this bread and drink this cup until you come again.*

Love as the One who, in love for you, gave himself for the life of the world.  
Come to the One who is food for you,  
that your hunger and thirst be no more.      *Refrain*

Dwell in the One who now dwells in you;  
make your home in the life-giving Word.  
Know only Christ, holy One of God,  
and believe in the truth you have heard.      *Refrain*

## MOVEMENT II

### Yielding in Love: The Basin and Towel

John 13:14-15 – “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

#### Reflection:

Jesus kneels before his disciples. The One who holds all authority chooses the posture of a servant.

This is the power of the kingdom.

When Jesus kneels with basin and towel, he exposes the false power of domination. The kingdom of God does not advance through cruelty or control, but through humble, vulnerable love.

Love that yields for the flourishing of others.

Where the world seeks status and superiority, Jesus teaches us humility and shared dignity.

#### Embodied Practice:

Look at your hands. These hands can grasp for control or they can serve.

Ask the Spirit: *Where is Christ inviting me to yield power for love?*

Pray quietly: *Jesus, shape my power in the way of Your love.*

#### Leader:

After the meal, Jesus rose from the table. He removed his outer robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and began to wash the feet of his disciples.

The Teacher became the servant. The Lord knelt before his friends and touched the dust of the road from their feet.

In this moment, Jesus revealed the heart of God. Power does not dominate. Love kneels.

Tonight, we remember that every person bears the image of God. To touch another with care is to honor the dignity God has given them.

Hear the words of Jesus from the Gospel of John: *“I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done for you.” (John 13:15)*

We now come to the basin. As we wash one another’s hands, we remember that Christ calls us to serve one another in love.’

This act is simple, but it is not small. In a world shaped by power and division, the followers of Jesus choose another way: the way of humility, the way of dignity, the way of shared care.

Table Partners Wash One Another's Hands

Words Spoken During Washing:

The one washing may say: *I honor the image of God in you.*

The one receiving may respond: *May we serve the world together.*

Prayer:

Christ our servant and our Lord, You knelt before your disciples and taught them the way of faithful love.

Form us into a community where humility overcomes pride, service overcomes domination, and compassion overcomes fear.

May our hands become instruments of your mercy and may our lives be a witness to your kingdom.

Through Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. Amen.

Hymn                      Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love, v. 1 and 4                      GG #203

*Refrain: Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love;*

*show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.*

Kneels at the feet of his friends,

silently washes their feet,

Master who acts as a slave to them.

*Refrain*

Loving puts us on our knees,

willing to wash others' feet;

this is the way we should live like you.

*Refrain*

## MOVEMENT III

### Remaining in the Wounds: The Garden of Gethsemane

Matthew 26:39 – “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me ... yet not as I will, but as you will.”

#### Transition to the Garden

After the meal and after the washing, Jesus walked into the night. He went to a garden to pray. Let us follow him there.

#### Reflection

In the garden, Jesus confronts the cost of faithful obedience. He does not hide his anguish. He brings it honestly before God.

The way of love is not always easy. To follow Christ sometimes means speaking truth when silence would be safer. It means protecting the vulnerable when others look away. It means resisting injustice even when power opposes us.

Across the world tonight, many carry heavy burdens – fear, injustice, grief, uncertainty.

Tonight we remember that discipleship requires courage. In moments of fear and crisis, followers of Jesus are called to remain faithful to truth, even when truth is costly.

#### Embodied Practice:

Place both feet firmly on the ground.

Take three slow breaths.

Notice what fears or concerns you carry tonight.

Offer them to God.

Pray softly: *Lord, meet me in this place and grant me courage.*

#### Leader:

After the meal and the washing, Jesus walked into the night. He went with his disciples to a garden called Gethsemane.

There, in the quiet of the trees, he began to pray.

The weight of what lay ahead pressed upon him. The path of love would lead through suffering. The path of truth would lead through conflict. The path of faithfulness would demand courage.

And so Jesus prayed: *“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not my will, but Yours be done.”*

Hear the words of the Gospel: *Then Jesus said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” (Matthew 26:38)*

### Call to Action:

On a piece of card stock from your table, write one place where you feel called to practice courage.

Perhaps it is:

- speaking truth
- protecting someone who is vulnerable
- resisting injustice
- defending dignity
- standing with those who are marginalized
- repairing a ruptured relationship

Write only what you feel led to name. Hold the paper in your hands as we pray.

### Prayer of Surrender

Let us pray together the prayer of Jesus in the garden:

**Not our will, but Yours be done.**

God of courage, You know our fears. You know the places where we feel small, where the cost of love feels heavy.

Give us the courage of Christ –  
the courage to speak truth,  
the courage to defend dignity,  
the courage to walk the path of faithful love.

When we are afraid, steady us. When we are uncertain, guide us. When the night feels long, remain with us.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

**Amen.**

## Offering of Courage

As a sign of our trust, we now lay these prayers before God. Bring your paper forward when you are ready during the hymn and thread it through the ropes in the stand.

This is our offering of courage – entrusting our fears to God and accepting the call to faithful love.

May the Spirit strengthen us to walk in truth, justice, and love. Amen.

## Hymn

What Wondrous Love is This, v. 1 and 3

GG #215

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,  
what wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss  
to bear the dread curse for my soul, for my soul.  
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing,  
to God and to the Lamb, I will sing;  
to God and to the Lamb who is the great I AM,  
while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing;  
while millions join the theme, I will sing!

## **MOVEMENT IV**

### **Renewal in Hope: Keeping Watch**

Romans 12:12 – Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

#### Reflection:

The night of Maundy Thursday is a night of watching. Jesus enters the suffering of the world. He carries the weight of injustice, betrayal, and fear. Yet his friends struggle to remain awake.

The night grows darker. The cross is near. Yet even in this moment, the kingdom of God is unfolding.

Hope does not deny suffering. Hope trusts that love will have the final word.

Followers of Jesus are called to remain awake – to practice compassion, justice, and truth until resurrection breaks forth.

To follow Jesus is to stand with those who are hungry, displaced, imprisoned, or afraid – for in serving the vulnerable, we serve Christ himself.

Tonight we keep watch with Christ.

Embodied Practice:

Hold your hands open.

Ask the Spirit: *What small act of faithful love is God inviting from me?*

Sit quietly with whatever arises.

Leader:

After praying in the garden, Jesus returned to his disciples. He found them sleeping. And he said to them: “Could you not keep watch with me one hour?”

Hear the words of Jesus from the Gospel: *Stay here and keep watch with me. (Matthew 26:38)*

We will now enter a time of prayerful vigil.

Each candle represents people or communities who carry suffering in our world. As we light these candles, we remember them before God.

Prayers of Intercession

(At each petition, another candle is lit)

For victims of violence:

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

For refugees, migrants, and those forced to flee their homes:

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

For those who are targeted because of race, identity, or belief:

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

For communities living under oppression or injustice:

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

For the poor, the forgotten, and those without voice:

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

For those who have been hungry today, and will be hungry again tomorrow:

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

For children who are growing up surrounded by war:

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

For parents who cannot keep their children safe:

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

For all who need healing in body, mind, spirit, or circumstance:

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

For all who grieve this night.

**Lord, teach us to remain awake in love.**

Let us now remain in silence. As the candles burn, pray for courage, for justice, and for the healing of the world.

(2-3 minutes of silence)

Prayer:

Faithful God, Your Son asked his friends to remain awake with him. Teach us to keep watch with the suffering of the world. Give us hearts that do not turn away from pain, hands that are ready to serve, and courage to stand with those who are vulnerable.

May the light of these candles remind us that even in the darkest night, your love continues to shine.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who has taught us to pray together, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven ...**

Hymn      An Upper Room Did Our Lord Prepare, v. 1 and 4      GG #202

An upper room did our Lord prepare  
for those he loved until the end:  
and his disciples still gather there  
to celebrate their risen friend.

No end there is! We depart in peace.  
He loves beyond our uttermost:  
in every room in our Father's house  
Christ will be there, as Lord and Host.

# SENDING

Leader:

Tonight we have walked with Jesus from the table – to the basin – to the garden – to the quiet watching of the night.

Go now in the spirit of Christ – to love your neighbor, to defend the dignity of every person, and to remain faithful even when the night is long.

Peace be with you.

People:

**And also with you.**

Postlude

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**This service adapted from Liturgy developed by *acalltochristians.org***

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