

Liturgy for a Maundy Thursday Meal

As you sit down for your meal, participants can follow along on their devices. Sections may be said responsively using the asterisks or simply read. There are two versions of the liturgy, so if you have young children, please scroll down to find the liturgy for families with young children.

Adults and Families with Older Children

Before the Meal

Excerpts from the Jewish prayer of Hallel (Psalms of Praise)

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.*

Christ has prepared a feast of love.

Lord open our lips*

and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Hallelujah! Give praise, you servants of the LORD; *

praise the Name of the LORD.

Let the Name of the LORD be blessed, *

from this time forth for evermore.

From the rising of the sun to its going down*

let the Name of the LORD be praised.

The LORD is high above all nations, *

and his glory above the heavens.

Who is like the LORD our God, who sits enthroned on high, *

but stoops to behold the heavens and the earth?

He takes up the weak out of the dust*

and lifts up the poor from the ashes.

He sets them with the princes, *

with the princes of his people.

He makes the woman of a childless house*

to be a joyful mother of children.

Hallelujah! When Israel came out of Egypt, *

the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech,

Judah became God's sanctuary*

and Israel his dominion.

The sea beheld it and fled; *

Jordan turned and went back.

The mountains skipped like rams*

and the little hills like young sheep.

What ailed you, O sea, that you fled? *

O Jordan, that you turned back?

You mountains, that you skipped like rams? *

you little hills like young sheep?

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, *
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
Who turned the hard rock into a pool of water*
and flint-stone into a flowing spring.
Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

At the Meal

(All present raise up their cups)

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.*

“For I tell you,” Jesus said, “I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

(All present drink)

During the meal, read the following:

Excerpts from King’s Cross by Tim Keller¹

For the ancient Jews – and still for Jews today – Passover was an annual meal that commemorated a defining moment in the history of Israel. More than a millennium before the time of Jesus, the Israelites had been enslaved to Egypt’s pharaoh, trapped in miserable bondage. After sending many plagues to Egypt to loosen the pharaoh’s oppressive grip on Israel, one night God sent the final plague; he unsheathed the sword of divine justice. And this justice would fall on everyone. It could not “pass over” the Jews simply because they were Jews. In every home in Egypt – of Jews and Egyptians alike – someone would die under the wrath of justice. The only way for your family to escape was to put your faith in God’s sacrificial provision; namely, you had to slay a lamb and put the blood on the doors as a sign of your faith in God. In every home that night there would either be a dead child or a dead lamb. When justice came down, either it fell on your family or you took shelter under the substitute, under the blood of the lamb. If you did accept this shelter, then death passed over you and you were saved; that’s why it was called Passover. You were saved only on the basis of faith in a substitutionary sacrifice.

This is how God delivered the Israelites and led them into freedom, into the Promised Land. Every year the Passover meal commemorated this deliverance (referred to as the exodus), which had been the most important moment in the life of Israel as a nation and as a people.

The Passover meal had to be prepared in a certain way and had a distinct form. It included four points at which the presider, holding a glass of wine, got up and explained the feast’s meaning. The four cups of wine represented four promises made by God in Exodus 6:6-7. These promises were for rescue from Egypt, for freedom from slavery, for redemption by God’s divine power, and for a renewed relationship with God. The third cup came at a point when the meal was almost completely eaten. The presider would use words from Deuteronomy 26 to bless the elements – the bread, the herbs, the lamb – by explaining how they were symbolic reminders of various aspects of the early Israelite’s captivity and deliverance. For example, he would show them the bread and say, “this is the bread of our affliction, which our fathers ate in the wilderness.”

¹ Keller, Dr. Tim. King’s Cross. ©2011 Timothy Keller. Published by Dutton, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

Jesus was the presider at the Passover meal with the disciples. Imagine the astonishment of the disciples when, blessing the elements and explaining their symbolism, Jesus departs from the script that has been reenacted by generation after generation. He shows them the bread and says, “This is my body.” What does that mean? Jesus is saying “This is the bread of my affliction, the bread of my suffering, because I’m going to lead the ultimate exodus and bring you the ultimate deliverance from bondage.”

With these simple gestures of holding up the bread and wine, with the simple words “this is my body...this is my blood,” Jesus is saying that all the earlier deliverances, the earlier sacrifices, the lambs at Passover, were pointing to himself. Just as the first Passover was observed the night before God redeemed the Israelites from slavery through the blood of the lambs, this Passover meal was eaten the night before God redeemed the world from sin and death through the blood of Jesus.

Exodus 12:1-14

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ²“This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ⁴If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. ⁹Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. ¹⁰Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. ¹¹This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD’s Passover.

¹²“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

¹⁴“This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance.

Luke 22:14-30

¹⁴When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁷After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. ²¹ But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. ²² The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!" ²³ They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵ Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶ But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. ²⁸ You are those who have stood by me in my trials. ²⁹ And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Discussion questions for reflection during dinner:

- What ideas, themes, or verses stand out to you in what was just read?
- Have you really noticed or considered the link between Passover (in Exodus) and the Last Supper (in Luke)? What do you take away from Tim Keller's commentary?
- In what ways has our social isolation impacted the way you are experiencing Holy Week?

To Conclude the Meal

The Prayers

Father, on this, the night he was betrayed, your Son Jesus Christ washed his disciples' feet. We commit ourselves to follow his example of love and service. *

Lord, hear us, and humble us.

On this night, he prayed for his disciples to be one. We pray for the unity of your Church. *

Lord, hear us, and unite us.

On this night, he prayed for those who were to believe through their ministry. We pray for the mission of your Church. *

Lord, hear us, and renew our zeal.

On this night, he commanded them to love, but suffered rejection himself. We pray for the rejected and unloved. *

Lord, hear us, and fill us with your love.

On this night, he reminded them that if the world hated them it hated him first. We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith. *

Lord, hear us, and give us your peace. Amen

The Concluding Hallel

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;*
his mercy endures forever.

Let Israel now proclaim,*

"His mercy endures forever."

Let the house of Aaron now proclaim, *

"His mercy endures for ever."
Let those who fear the LORD now proclaim, *
"His mercy endures for ever."
I called to the LORD in my distress; *
the LORD answered by setting me free.
The LORD is at my side, therefore I will not fear; *
what can anyone do to me?
The LORD is at my side to help me; *
I will triumph over those who hate me.
The same stone which the builders rejected *
has become the chief cornerstone.
This is the LORD'S doing, *
and it is marvelous in our eyes.
On this day the LORD has acted; *
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
Hosanna, LORD, hosanna! *
LORD, send us now success.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; *
we bless you from the house of the LORD.
God is the LORD; he has shined upon us; *
form a procession with branches up to the horns of the altar.
"You are my God, and I will thank you; *
you are my God, and I will exalt you."
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; *
his mercy endures forever.
Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.



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Liturgy for a Maundy Thursday Meal

Families with Young Children

Before the Meal

Read the following:

Tonight we are going to remember the things that God has done for us, the ways that he loves us, especially the way that he has given us everything in Jesus his son. Tonight, we remember what Jesus did the day before he died on the cross. Tomorrow, we remember the day that he was crucified and died for us. Sunday, we celebrate Easter, the day that he was resurrected and defeated sin and death.

On the night before he died, Jesus sat down for a meal with his closest friends and followers just like we are doing. It was a special meal called Passover. At Passover, God's people remember the time when God rescued them from Egypt and Pharaoh and began to lead them to a new home called the Promised Land.

Let's start by thanking God for our food, just like Jesus did that night.

Pray your own prayer of blessing over the meal or use this:

God, thank you for this food. Thank you for ___ who prepared it for us. Thank you that all good things, like this food, come from you. Thanks for providing for us. Bless us tonight. Amen.

During the Meal

Read this excerpt from The Jesus Storybook Bible:

"The Servant King" (The Last Supper, from Mark 14 and John 13-14)²

It was Passover, the time when God's people remembered how God had rescued them from being slaves in Egypt. Every year they killed a lamb and ate it. "The lamb died instead of us!" they would say.

But this Passover, God was getting ready for an even Greater Rescue.

Jesus and his friends were having the Passover meal together in an upstairs room. But Jesus' friends were arguing. What about? They were arguing about stinky feet. Stinky feet? Yes, that's right. Stinky feet.

(Now the thing about feet back then was that people didn't wear shoes; they only wore sandals, which might not sound unusual, except that the streets in those days were dirty—and I don't mean just dusty dirty—I mean really stinky dirty. With all those cows and horses everywhere, you can imagine all the stuff on the street that ended up on their feet!)

So anyway, someone had to wash away the dirt, but it was a dreadful job. Who on earth would ever dream of volunteering to do it? Only the lowliest servant. "I'm not the servant!" Peter

² Lloyd-Jones, Sally. The Jesus Storybook Bible: every story whispers his name. © 2012 by Zondervan.

said. "Nor am I!" said Matthew. Quietly, Jesus got up from the table, took off his robe, picked up a basin of water, knelt down, and started to wash his friends' feet.

"You can't," Peter said. He didn't understand about Jesus being the Servant King.

"If you don't let me wash away the dirt, Peter," Jesus said, "you can't be close to me."

Jesus knew that what people needed most was to be clean on the inside. All the dirt on their feet was nothing compared to the sin inside their hearts. "Then wash me, Lord!" Peter said, tears filling his eyes. "All of me!" One by one, Jesus washed everyone's feet.

"I am doing this because I love you," Jesus explained. "Do this for each other."

Now, one of Jesus' friends had made a bad plan. No one else knew what the bad plan was. But Jesus knew—and so did Judas. Judas was going to help the Leaders capture Jesus—for 30 pieces of silver. "Go on, Judas," Jesus said. And Judas got up from the meal, left the room, and walked out into the night.

Then Jesus picked up some bread and broke it. He gave it to his friends. He picked up a cup of wine and thanked God for it. He poured it out and shared it. "My body is like this bread. It will break," Jesus told them. "This cup of wine is like my blood. It will pour out."

"But this is how God will rescue the whole world. My life will break and God's broken world will mend. My heart will tear apart—and your hearts will heal. Just as the passover lamb died, so now I will die instead of you. My blood will wash away all of your sins. And you'll be clean on the inside—in your hearts. So, whenever you eat and drink, remember," Jesus said, "I've rescued you!"

Jesus knew it was nearly time for Him to leave the world and go back to God. "I won't be with you long," he said. "You are going to be very sad. But God's Helper will come. And then you'll be filled up with a Forever Happiness that won't ever leave. So don't be afraid. You are my friends and I love you."

Then they sang their favorite song. And walked up to their favorite place, an olive garden.

Discussion questions for reflection during dinner:

- Someone needed to wash everyone's stinky feet. What chore do you dislike the most? Which one is the stinkiest chore at our house?
- Can you think of a time someone did a hard or stinky chore for you? How did that make you feel?
- Why did Jesus say he washed his friends' feet? ("Because I love you.") What are things that you do for people you love?
- Jesus told his friends to serve one another, just like he was serving them. What are some things we can do to serve our family, friends and neighbors?

To Conclude the Meal

Say the following:

Let's end our meal by praising God for all that he gives us and saying The Lord's Prayer.

The Doxology

(Try singing)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise him all creatures here below;

Praise him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

For Parents, read later in the evening:

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for a renewed relationship with God. The third cup came at a point when the meal was almost completely eaten. The presider would use words from Deuteronomy 26 to bless the elements – the bread, the herbs, the lamb – by explaining how they were symbolic reminders of various aspects of the early Israelite’s captivity and deliverance. For example, he would show them the bread and say, “this is the bread of our affliction, which our fathers ate in the wilderness.”

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