

# A Maundy Thursday Meditation

Co-missioners,

Some of you will spend this evening at a Maundy Thursday service. Others will not. In either case, you might be glad for another dose of the Gospel God gives us to hear and trust and marvel in as we slide into the three-day heart of the Church's liturgical year.

With this in mind, we send you a homily that was preached this time a year ago at a Lutheran church in the U.S. It manages somehow to touch on all four texts appointed for Maundy Thursday in the Revised Common Lectionary. We encourage you to read these through before going further.

To borrow from the homilist: God grant us all the open ears and honest, thirsty hearts that will grab greedily for God's cup of salvation over these next few days.

Peace and Joy,  
The Crossings Community

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## A Meditation for a Maundy Thursday Service in 2022 (Equally applicable in 2023)

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.

From the Psalm we sang, #116 (NRSV): "What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD."

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Two things are happening here tonight.



Apostelkommunion aus der Kirche Asinou -,  
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First, we are witnessing the LORD's bounty at its deepest and most profound. We will do this with our hands and mouths before the night is out.

We also witnessed it with our ears just now as we listened to the texts appointed for this evening.

One of them featured God working through Moses to prepare a great mass of slaves for their imminent escape from Egypt.

The second featured God working through the apostle Paul to open the minds of a little group of new Christians to the marvel of the Lord's Supper they get to share.

The third featured God himself in the person of Jesus washing the dirty feet of a ragtag little band of disciples, most of

them with calluses on their working-class hands. Among the feet Jesus washes that night are those of the traitor in the bunch. Also those of the loudmouth, the guy who later that evening will use this mouth of his to lie three times about ever knowing Jesus.

Already you get the drift. God is not the least bit picky about who he distributes his bounty to. If anything, he seems to go out of his way to start with the folks who deserve it least, the ones who in this so-called real world of ours are packed at the back of the plane, if indeed they ever get to board a plane as their sad little lives dribble away.

Those disciples of Jesus are a sorry bunch. So are those Christians at Corinth. Their specialty, it seems, is to play silly little games of "who's better, who's worse." They've been doing this at their weekly potluck dinners. Some eat and stuff themselves. Others look on with their stomachs growling. Clueless, all of them, and a few of them despicable.

As for those slaves in Egypt, well, what more is there to say? A slave is a slave, a piece of walking, breathing property, no possessions of its own to speak of, a thing you take a stick to if you want to get it moving. Of human beings, they're the lowest of the low—and yes, of course, what just came out of my mouth is loathsome, appalling, disgusting, unspeakably demeaning, to say nothing of cruel, yet that in fact is how slaves have always been regarded and treated by those who in their wickedness have presumed to own them.

God, thank God, is not bound by our opinions of each other. Anything but, as he underscores again tonight.

So, for example, it's on behalf of the slaves and not the owners that God cuts loose with the greatest display of his bounty in the entire Old Testament. We call it the Exodus, the Red Sea

crossing, the manna in the wilderness. We call it freedom from bondage.



Spyridon Sperantzas, Washing Feet, CC BY-SA 4.0  
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Or see again, for example, whose feet get washed by the Word made flesh, this One through whom all things were made, God Almighty in the person of Jesus. Billionaires would pay billions today to be able to brag that God Almighty washed their feet, with a video to prove it, of course. I wish we had a video on hand so that everybody could see those hands of God scrubbing the feet of fishermen instead, to say nothing of the tax agent, the sad-sack Zealot, and all the rest of the back-country riffraff in the room that night.

And as if that were not enough, now the camera swings again to the ludicrous little church in Corinth whose squabbling, pretentious members are being prepared by Paul the apostle, no less, to meet the Lord of heaven and earth in the blessed sacrament. God's bounty to them is the body and blood of their

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given with bread and wine for them to eat and drink. God's bounty is their freedom in Christ from the everlasting consequences of the sin they're enslaved to. God's bounty is the absurdly high regard that God holds them in on account of Jesus' death for them.

God's bounty is the breathtaking future that their resurrected Christ is taking them to as he did that criminal we heard about on Sunday—another example, by the way, of God pouring out his best on those who deserve it least.

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You and I are wallowing in the bounty of God this evening. I hope and pray we all see it. It's not as if we don't qualify, if qualify is the word.

I'm as Corinthian as they come, and so are you. We all have our egos, our pretensions.

I walked in here tonight on sin-spattered feet. You did the same. I trust that nobody here would be foolish enough to dispute that.

I came here tonight shackled in the chains of responsibility and expectation and obligation, a heap of it unmet. Somewhere in the trove of ancient literature it's said of slaves that they have a shifty look. Shifty, I suppose, because they're forever looking over their shoulders to see who's about to whack them on the back for not getting the job done. I do my best not to wear that look, but I sure am familiar with the feeling behind it. Not a day goes by, and it doesn't grind on me. You too, perhaps. In fact, I encourage you to grope for that feeling, if you have to. Find it. Admit to it. Let it scrape on you again.

I say this, because nothing will prepare you better for the

brehtaking bounty of this or any other hour when your ear is tuned to God's final Word on you in Jesus Christ. It's a word of joy, of resounding delight. "My daughter!" "My son!" "My little children," as Jesus put it himself when he talked to his disciples on this night that we remember. You may have noticed him saying that.

"My little children" as opposed to "you dirty slobs," "you puffed up jerks," "you lazy slaves."

"My little children for whose lives I lay down my own life."

God's bounty to you, to me, is a heart that embraces us in Jesus Christ and calls us God's own forever.

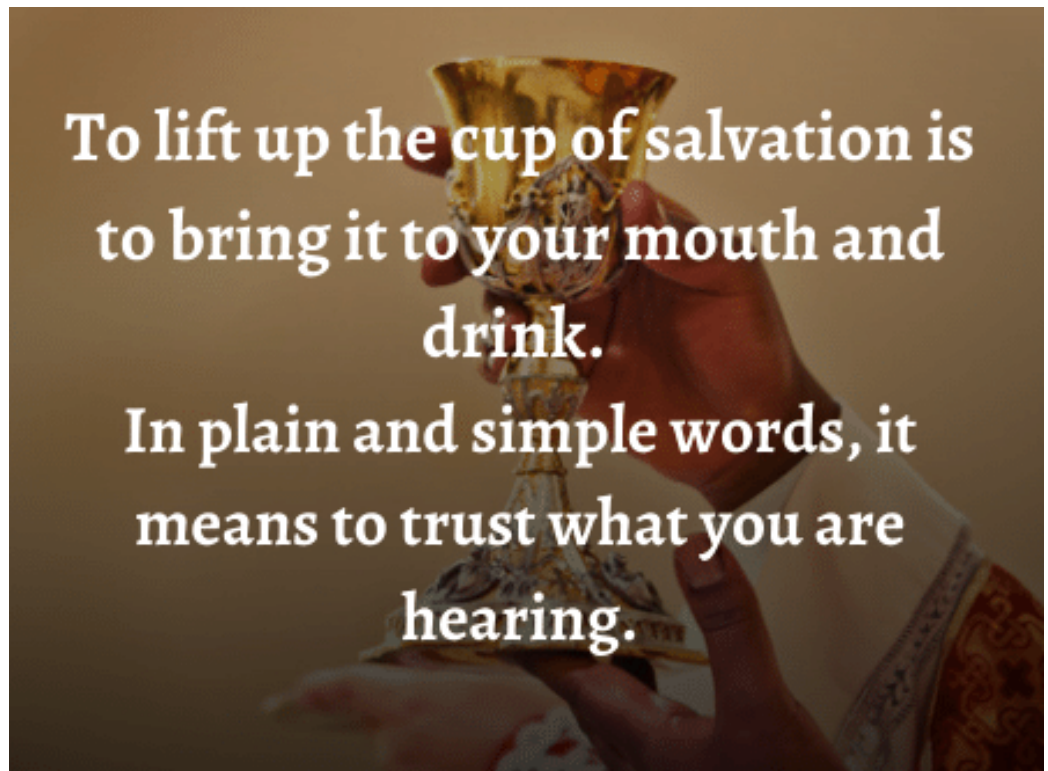
"This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, shed for you." So Jesus will say to us as once he said to those Corinthians way back when. And with that he invites us to remember something else he once said: "Nothing and nobody will snatch them from my hand."

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Which brings us at last to the second thing to consider tonight. It's the Psalmist's answer to the question he poses: "What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?"

Two-part answer: "I will lift up the cup of salvation." "I will call on the name of the Lord."





From Canva

To lift up the cup of salvation is to bring it to your mouth and drink. In plain and simple words, it means to trust what you are hearing.

And out of the gate, here's the first thing to trust. Christ your Lord will not give up on you, nor will the Father turn his back on when your trust flickers and wavers as it does—as it will. All of us are prone to the lies that Peter told when the night got really dark. All of us have grumbled and will grumble as the slaves did when they got to the Red Sea with the Egyptian army bearing down. I don't know of a church that doesn't suffer somehow from the faithless nonsense that Paul dealt with at Corinth.

When you're caught in such things, lift up the cup of salvation, this bounty of God's unwavering commitment to you. "I will not leave you or forsake you," Jesus said. Remember that.

And when you remember, take the second step. "Call on the name

of the Lord.” Make like that other Psalmist whose words you might recall: “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord hear my voice!” Say this; pray this. And after that—wait.

Wait for God to come through for you as he has; as he will; as he has done for us and for all the world in our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever you do, don’t start calling on those other gods that people give their hearts and hopes to when they’re aching for relief from a sense of insignificance or futility or guilt, for that matter. Not a one of them will do what the One and Only Genuine God has done for you in Jesus Christ. Not a one of them would die for you.

Remember that tonight as you lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. Remember it tomorrow too.

And on the third day, that threshold of Easter: help someone else remember that Christ has died, that Christ is risen, that Christ will come again with his heart set on them.

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In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.

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**Thursday Theology: that the benefits of Christ be put to use**  
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