Love Feast

Maundy Thursday, April 13, 2014 Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

Preparing

Meditation Music

Scripture Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19 (Contemporary English Version)

Introduction and Prayer (#733)

Hymn "Here in this place" 6

Moving to the Feetwashing Circles

Washing

Scripture John 13:1-17

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(uses "O Master, let me walk with thee" #357)

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After the meal, you are invited to participate in the fellowship discovered in cleaning up. Thanks to all who prepared, led, participated, and picked up afterward.

Love Feast

Maundy Thursday, April 13, 2017 Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

Preparing

Meditation Music

Scripture

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

- ¹ I love the LORD because he hears my requests for mercy.
- ² I'll call out to him as long as I live, because he listens closely to me.
- ¹² What can I give back to the LORD for all the good things he has done for me?
- ¹³ I'll lift up the cup of salvation. I'll call on the LORD's name.
- ¹⁴ I'll keep the promises I made to the LORD in the presence of all God's people.
- ¹⁵ The death of the LORD's faithful is a costly loss in his eyes.

- ¹⁶ Oh yes, LORD, I am definitely your servant!
 I am your servant and the son of your female servant—
 you've freed me from my chains.
- ¹⁷ So I'll offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to you, and I'll call on the LORD's name.
- ¹⁸ I'll keep the promises I made to the LORD in the presence of all God's people,
- in the courtyards of the LORD's house, which is in the center of Jerusalem.

 Praise the LORD!

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Introduction and Prayer

On this night of nights, we have gathered in the presence of the One who really hears those who cry out for mercy, the God who listens closely and responds. You see, long ago, the children of Israel cried out in their bondage in Egypt, and God heard them and sent his servant, Moses, to set them free. This Psalm, #116, is the fourth Psalm that is read as part of the celebration of Passover, the yearly remembrance of their deliverance from slavery to Pharaoh.

Last Friday, our Jewish friends once again observed the Passover, a meal Jesus and his disciples celebrated on the night when he was betrayed. As we will once again remember, Jesus lifted up the cup of salvation as part of that meal, which is a reason why this Psalm also is connected to the Lord's Supper. In its original setting, the 15th verse is a mournful cry over the death of the Lord's

faithful, whose voice has been silenced. However, when read in the context of what we are here to remember this night, the death of Jesus – God's faithful One – is precious in the sight of the Lord. His broken body and shed blood was and is a sacrifice of thanksgiving. God, who really hears, sent his Son to deliver those enslaved to sin and death. Jesus saved us upon the cross. Praise the Lord!

Welcome to this meal of remembrance, whether you have been here often or are joining us for the first time tonight. As you probably know, Love Feast is more than bread and cup. Like the children of Israel who were led out of Egypt, through the sea and the wilderness by Moses, our celebration this evening is a journey. In a few minutes, we will leave these pews to head to circles of chairs. The men will gather on this side of the partition at the back of the sanctuary, and the women will head to the chairs on the other side.

There, you will be invited to be washed and to wash. Not your whole body, just a portion of it. Those who are able to get down on their knees (and let's be honest about this) are welcome to wash feet. The rest are invited to wash hands. If you are among those who will wash hands, look to _____ on the men's side, and _____ on the women's side. These deacons will direct you. If you wish to simply observe, that is fine. Just tell those on either side of you. After words of introduction, we'll do as Jesus instructed while we sing some of the Lord's songs.

The next part of our journey leads from the circles of chairs to the tables. Find a spot, perhaps next to

someone you don't know, or don't know very well. Please fill in the seats closest to the cross first. The next part of our Love Feast will happen there, as we share a simple meal, then shift to our time of communion... We will need our hymnals for this journey, so make sure you take one from the pew as head forth.

Now, please turn in your hymnal to #733, and let us pray together the familiar words of St. Francis of Assisi.

Lord,
make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

AMEN

(attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, 13th c.)

Hymn

"Here in this place" #6

- 1. Here in this place, new light is streaming, now is the darkness vanished away.

 See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings, brought here to you in the light of this day.

 Gather us in the lost and forsaken, gather us in the blind and the lame.

 Call to us now, and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name.
- 2. We are the young our lives are a mystery, we are the old who yearn for your face. We have been sung throughout all of history, called to be light to the whole human race. Gather us in the rich and the haughty, gather us in the proud and the strong. Give us a heart so meek and so lowly, give us the courage to enter the song.
- 3. Here we will take the wine and the water, here we will take the bread of new birth. Here you shall call your sons and your daughters, call us anew to be salt for the earth. Give us to drink the wine of compassion, give us to eat the bread that is you. Nourish us well, and teach us to fashion lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

4. Not in the dark of buildings confining, not in some heaven, light years away, but here in this place, the new light is shining; now is the Kingdom, now is the day. Gather us in - and hold us forever, gather us in - and make us your own. Gather us in - all peoples together, fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

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Moving to the Feetwashing Circles

Washing

Scripture John 13:1-17

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel

that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

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Responsive Introduction

(from back of bulletin)

Leader: Master, as we kneel in love and service to wash each other's feet, help us to learn from your example and to understand the sacrifice.

Sing: (verse 1) "O Master, let me walk with thee" #357

Leader: Master, we tarry often because of the busyness of our lives. May our intentions become acts of service. Guide our feet as we walk with you.

Sing: (verse 2) "O Master, let me walk with thee" #357

Leader: Master, help us have patience and forbearance with those we disagree with. May your example of unconditional love be our example, too.

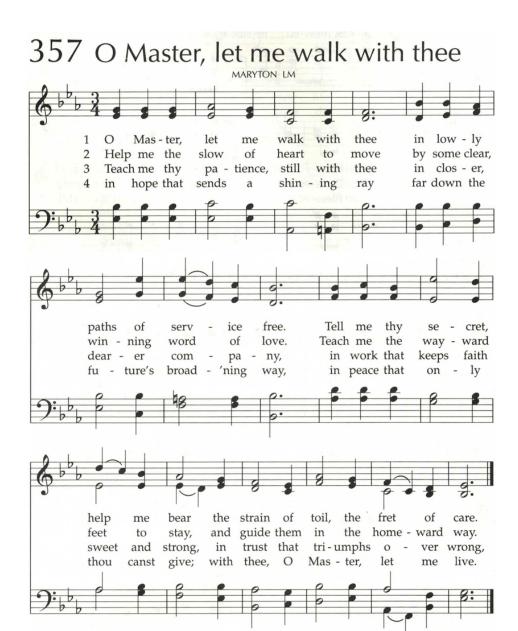
Sing: (verse 3) "O Master, let me walk with thee" #357

Leader: Master, help us to be shining examples of your love, proclaiming a peace that only you can give, and trusting in your promises.

Sing: (verse 4) "O Master, let me walk with thee" #357

All: Master, you have given us an example of love and service. Empower us to carry forth your mission in all we say and do. Bless us as we bless you in our proclaiming of the gospel through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

> by Dava Hensley, pastor First Church of the Brethren Roanoke, Virginia from Church of the Brethren *Living Word* bulletin © 2017 Brethren Press.



Text: Washington Gladden, Sunday Afternoon, 1879 Music: H. Percy Smith, Church Hymns with Tunes, 1874

Tub and Towel time

(hymns sung as needed)

307 Will you let me be your servant



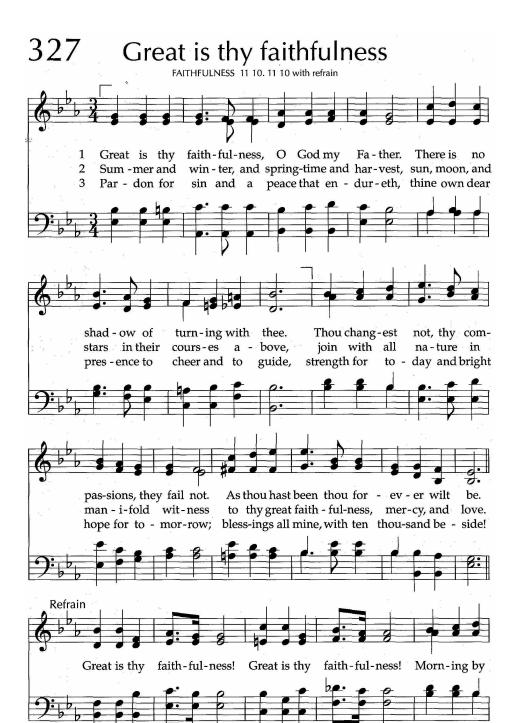
*Guitar chords for unison singing only

Text: Richard Gillard, 1977, alt.

Music: Richard Gillard, 1977; adapted by Betty Pulkingham Text and Music copyright ©1977 Scripture in Song

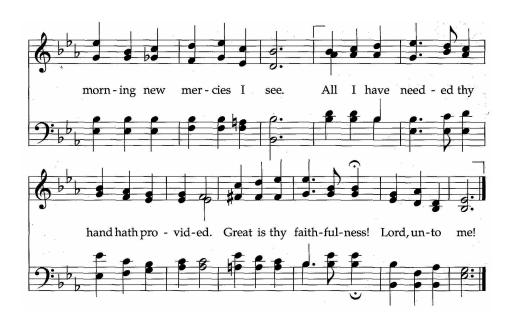


Text: Adelaide A. Pollard, Northfield Hymnal with Alexander's Supplement, 1907, alt. Music: George C. Stebbins, Northfield Hymnal with Alexander's Supplement, 1907



Text: Thomas O. Chisholm, Songs of Salvation, 1923 Music: William Runyan, Songs of Salvation, 1923

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Moving to the Lord's Table

Eating

Scripture

Exodus 12:1-14

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ² This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³ Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. 4 If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷ They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 8 They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰ You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹ This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of

the LORD. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. ¹⁴ This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

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Spoken Introduction

Aaron concerning the Passover meal, to be celebrated every year as a remembrance of how the Lord passed over the homes of the Israelites during the final plague that broke Pharaoh's resolve and led him to set them free. The directions for this meal are quite detailed, and they become more so elsewhere in the Torah and in tradition. As I think over that first Passover in Egypt, before it became something to remember, focusing upon details might have been a good coping mechanism for a frightful night when the angel of death was on the loose. Hoe intently they must have prayed that the blood of the lamb painted on the doorpost of each Hebrew home would be seen and that death not visit this house.

The night we remember just now, when Jesus celebrated Passover with his followers, turned out to be a fearful one as well. The feast would lead to a garden of prayer, where events quickly unfolded. Temple guards would grab and take Jesus on a sleepless night of trials before religious and secular leaders. Like a defenseless lamb, he would be dragged hither and yon, and eventually be sacrificed upon a cross. But that was still hours away for those first disciples. This moment contained a meal with friends.

Once upon a time, Brethren were strict about having lamb on the menu for Love Feast, to help make the connection to Passover and to remind sisters and brothers of Jesus - the lamb who was slain for our sins. I was reminded by a more conservative brother this past week that the Old Brethren considered the last supper not to be a Passover meal, based upon their reading of the Gospel of John. Instead, on that next day Jesus would himself become the sacrificial lamb, his blood painted upon the threshold of the believers' hearts. Death passes over. He became the meal.

Well, sisters and brothers, lamb has since given way to beef, for a variety of reasons. Some congregations even leave out meat altogether. Here, we have retained some of the old tradition. Even so, this is still a meal where the menu is not quite as important as the persons who sit around us. In that first upper room were some disciples who were related. But there were others who were not buddy-buddy with each other. How might a tax collector like Matthew and a fisherman like Peter have gotten along? Were there awkward silences when they had to sit together? Or did conversation flow easily? Who knows. We have received some stories of arguments between disciples, like who would sit closest to Jesus, or who was more important. Almost sounds like my kids when they were growing up. There is no record of Jesus saying, "Don't make me get your heavenly father in here."

This portion of our Brethren celebration is sometimes called the "agape meal." What really matters is not what is on the plate, but what is shared between brothers and sisters: LOVE. But not just any kind of love. It's not an *eros* kind of love, as between persons attracted to one another Nor is it a *philia* kind of love among siblings. The love that's front and center is *agape*, Godlike love. Love that is more than we can comprehend. Love that seems impossible. Love that is deeper and wider than our emotions, both tough and tender, just and good. Love that is able to stretch beyond any tearing point, yet is firmer than any metal. "*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases*," the Bible says.

So, my friends, as we eat this simple meal together, share this love, and remember the lamb of God. Jesus is among us this night. He sits beside or across from us, speaking through a brother or a sister. He even speaks through us to another. Our conversation may seem mundane – what's happening at work, how school is

going, the latest O's game, our aches or pains, the food itself (which some of us really love!), or all sorts of things over which we rejoice or worry... Remember that Christ Jesus is in the ordinary. There is no place that God is not. So, share his love...

"Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love. The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above."

Pray with me.

Prayer

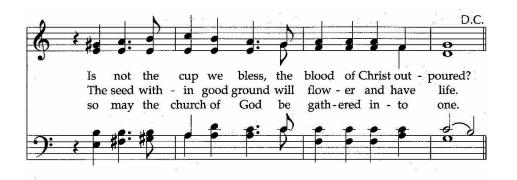
This simple meal, O God, we share,
And ask you bless these hearts that care for us.
We're thankful, Lord, for bread and meat,
And for these friends we now will greet with love.
Amen.

Let's eat!

Eating Together

Communing





Scripture

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

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Spoken Introduction and Invitation

And Jesus took bread... If this was, indeed, the Passover meal that Jesus celebrated with his disciples on that long-ago night, then the bread he broke and shared would have been unleavened. It takes time for yeast to

work its wonder and bread to rise, you know. The dough must sit untouched for a while. But on the night when the Israelites prepared to escape Egypt, time was of the essence. There was no yeast in the bread, waiting to rise. The instructions involved traveling light, on a moment's notice. That's what is remembered every year the Passover meal is celebrated.

You note that the bread on the table before us is unleavened, as well. It contains no yeast. Thus, it harkens back to the Passover meal, and to that sense of readiness to move out at God's word on a moment's notice, traveling light... However, Jesus added his own leaven to the bread, when he said, "this is my body."

Perhaps, on that upper room night, the disciples remembered the loaves and fishes that Jesus multiplied for the crowds. When they took the bread Jesus broke and shared, they might have recalled that it had once fed thousands, with plenty leftover. Or maybe an older story came to their minds — of bread from heaven provided to wandering Israelites in the wilderness, just enough to sustain for a one day. Certainly, when Jesus taught his followers to pray for daily bread, this wilderness manna was front and center.

On that Passover night in Jerusalem long ago, in that upper room, with an awareness that an ending was immanent, Jesus prayed. It doesn't say what he prayed. Not really. Could be it was a traditional Passover prayer. Or maybe it began with "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name..." (Matthew 6:9) or, perhaps, "Father,

the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you..." (John 17:1). In the memory which has been handed down to us, it simply says that after Jesus prayed, he took that unleavened bread and broke it – that is, he tore in half. As he did so, he said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

By the word "this," (as in "this body") did he mean the bread? Or was he pointing to those gathered around him? Probably a bit of both, for they were ... we are the body of Christ being sent into the world... And then the fruit of the vine, a cup of which he held up. Connecting it to the blood of the lamb would not have been unusual for those original disciples, for Passover remembered how the lamb's blood, painted upon every Hebrew doorpost, saved every Israelite within, on that night of nights in Egypt. The very next day, on Good Friday, blood would be shed upon a crude cross, and a death would lead to life for those whosover believed.

We hear Jesus say to us, gathered here: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." A fresh start, trusting in a promise deep and wide. "Do this, as often as you drink it," he says once again, "in remembrance of me." And so we "do this" – prayerfully breaking bread with a sister or brother across the table from us, then eating; and prayerfully lifting up our cup and drinking. As we do so, we remember, on this night of nights. And Jesus is among us, a member of us once again, the head of this body. He is re-membered. In our active remembrance, eating this bread and drinking the cup, we proclaim the Lord's lifegiving death until he comes.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Turn in the back of your hymnal to #786, and let us join our voices in prayer for this bread and cup which sit before us on the table.

O God,

your steadfast love has been ours for generations.

Through Christ, you brought us out of the abyss of death and into the light of eternal love.

With joy and thanksgiving, we proclaim our salvation, remembering Christ's death and resurrection, until he comes again.

As we break bread and share the cup together, may Christ be present with us, and may the Spirit bind us together as Christ's body in this world. AMEN

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Surrounding with a song

Let's sing together the first verse of #453, "Let us break bread together," and thus surround our breaking of bread and drinking from the cup of Christ with song.

Let us break bread together on our knees.

Let us break bread together on our knees.

When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,

O Lord, have mercy on me.



Together with the person across from you, break the bread.

Music: African-American spiritual

His body was broken for you. Eat and remember.

Shall we sing together the second verse?

Let us drink wine together on our knees.

Let us drink wine together on our knees.

When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,

O Lord, have mercy on me.

Lift up the cup of the new covenant.

His blood was shed for you.

Drink and remember.

Shall we sing together the third verse?

Let us praise God together on our knees.

Let us praise God together on our knees.

When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,

O Lord, have mercy on me.

Last Words

Matthew's account of this Last Supper ends with these words:

"When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives"

(Matthew 25:30).

Our time of remembrance this evening is coming to an end. Before we move on, let's sing our own hymn, and then pray as one voice. First, #259 – "When I survey the wondrous cross."

When I survey the wondrous cross 259



Text: Isaac Watts, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707

Music: Lowell Mason, 1824, Boston Handel and Haydn Society Collection, 3rd ed., 1825

Unison Prayer

Eternal Lord,
as we leave this place of worship and communion,
may we go, knowing that you never leave or forsake us.
Help us to go with the song of faith in our hearts,
the peace of Christ in our lives,
the protection of the Spirit beside us,
and the security of your presence beneath us. AMEN

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Shalom! Go in Peace.