

Maundy Thursday

By God's Grace may I speak in the name of the God who is Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Slowly it's all unravelling. There has been an unease around Jesus for a while. Tension has been rising. The disciples are trying to hold on to their hope that Jesus will successfully navigate the danger that is lurking. He has a way with words, he can disarm people with just a couple questions. Only days ago, he came into the city and was hailed as the son of David and treated like a new king. Surely, he will be able to get enough people on his side, he will be able to come out on top and they will be able to stay together and have a front row seat to watch Jesus create that Kingdom of God he keeps talking about. One where justice reigns, where oppression is no more, where there is no more hunger or sickness. That's why he has been challenging the oppressors, feeding the 5000 and healing the sick, right?

So why does he keep talking of dying? Because Jesus is facing death. Shortly after entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and just days before he is killed, Jesus explains what is about to happen to the confused disciples with these words:

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Jesus knows, that his time has come. There will be no navigating around the dangers anymore. No more disarming questions. He will die. He will be like the lambs slaughtered for the first Passover, when the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. Like a lamb led

to slaughter. Like a grain, falling into the earth and dying, so it can bear much fruit. Jesus is preparing to die.

He does the work of a lowly servant, washing the disciples' feet, despite being their leader, their Rabbi. Showing them a very different kind of leadership, one that wants to serve, rather than dominate and profit. A grain that would rather fall into the earth and die than remain a single grain. That is why we wash feet and have our feet washed on Maundy Thursday.

He breaks bread and shares wine with his disciples and tells them, that these are his body and blood, broken and given for them. Tells them to do this in remembrance of him. Because he is the grain that will fall into the earth and die to bring much fruit. Feeding us again and again with the fruit born out of that death. That is why we share in bread and wine on Maundy Thursday.

He goes away to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. Overcome with fear of that last and lonely journey into death, the pain and suffering, the betrayal and abandonment he will have to face, he prays. He wrestles with his fear and finds the courage to pray "Thy will be done." A grain giving up control, letting itself fall into the earth, ready to die. That is why we strip the altars on Maundy Thursday.

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

It's all unravelling, the disciples are still wanting to hold on to control, asking about who might betray Jesus, Peter refusing to have his feet washed, them trying to stay awake but failing as Jesus prays, someone drawing a sword to fight, when Jesus is being ar-

rested. But it's all unravelling. So much is happening so fast, changing so quickly. It's all so confusing for the disciples. None of it is making sense, the puzzle pieces don't seem to fit at all. It's all a big mess.

And yet, as the seed is falling into the earth, ready to die, God is still at work. Once again God will create something beautiful out of chaos. Because that's the kind of God we believe in: One who will again and again create miraculous, beautiful things out of nothingness, chaos and death. In our lives, in this world and as Jesus prepares to die.

Amen.