

## MAUNDY THURSDAY MEDITATION



***"In this very room!"***

## ***“In this very room!”***

*(Please take the opportunity to first read through John 13 to refamiliarise yourself with the events of the evening before the crucifixion.)*

As we share together this evening, the reality is that due to the current world situation we are facing, we are not physically able to be together in the way that we would have wanted. Over these past few weeks, we have discovered different ways of connecting with one another, of worshipping, of being together at a “social distance”.

The picture above of Da Vinci’s “Last Supper” has been very cleverly altered by someone to reflect our present reality. That reality is of course, that although we are not able to meet in the same room (unless you are part of a family sharing this time together), we are still able to worship at the same time, and with the same message. We are in that sense, together ***“In this very room!”***



As I prepared for this, I was so very conscious of this, and into my mind came a beautiful song which I first heard some years ago, entitled simply *“In this very room”*.

### **In this very room**

*There’s quite enough love  
for “one like me”*

*And in this very room,  
there’s quite enough joy  
for one like me*

*And there’s quite enough  
hope,  
and quite enough power  
To chase away any gloom  
For Jesus, Lord Jesus...  
is in this very room*

### **In this very room**

*There’s quite enough love  
for “all of us”*

*And in this very room,  
there’s quite enough joy  
for one like me*

*And there’s quite enough  
hope,  
and quite enough power  
To chase away any gloom  
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### **In this very room**

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*And in this very room,  
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**Maundy** is an English form of the Latin word for commandment. The main theme of Maundy Thursday is Jesus’ new commandment, given on this the eve of his death, to “love one another even as I have loved you” (John 13:34)

Maundy Thursday is the night of the final meal that Jesus had with his disciples; the night in which he washed his disciple’s feet; it is also the night of Gethsemane - the night of anguish of soul as he faced his betrayal and fast approaching death.

It’s a night all about love! When Jesus sets out the motivation and purpose of the events which will follow within the next few days, and the impact that will have on every day in the future of mankind.

## John 13

**34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (NIV)**

**Remember that as we share "together" God himself will be with us in this very room.**

*Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The Holy one is here;  
Come bow before him now  
With reverence and fear.  
In him no sin is found,  
We stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The Holy one is here.*

*Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place;  
He comes to cleanse and heal,  
To minister his grace.  
No work too hard for him,  
In faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place.*

**PRAYER** (read out loud if you feel comfortable doing so)

*Father, in this room which has become a place of  
prayer,  
I feel your everlasting arms  
Enfolding me...Caressing me...Cradling me...  
In the embrace of never-ending love  
For this tenderness - I praise you  
That I am the focus of your love - I thank you  
That you have deigned to call me  
your child - I adore you  
And surrender myself to you,  
though all too feeble is the response of my love.*

*Father, I abandon myself into your hands  
Do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do, I thank you  
I am ready for all, I accept all  
Let only your will be done in me and in all creatures.  
I wish no more than this O Lord  
Into your hands I commend my soul -  
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart  
For I love you Lord, and so need to give myself  
To surrender myself into your hands without  
reserve  
And with boundless confidence  
For you are my Father.*

### **"What does love look like?"**

Tonight we "gather" at the end of Lent, and we hear Jesus' new commandment to love one another. But what does that love look like?

How do we answer that?

Our scripture reading helps us as it reveals to us some word images of love.

*During the meal, Jesus got up, took off his outer robe, tied a towel around his waist, and began to wash his disciples' feet.*

**Love looks like a towel** -- the towel of servanthood.

Pastor Kurt Johnson served for over 20 years as Chaplain at the University of Texas in Austin. (He was known as "PJ" to his students).



Every 4-5 years, as the worshiping community of students and faculty changed with the new intake of students, PJ would put out a call for facecloths (flannels). He would ask everyone to bring their old washcloths -- worn, tattered, brightly coloured or plain -- all different shapes and styles.

He would then take the facecloths, arrange them in the design of a stole, and then have them sewn together. It was a stole he wore at every Church Service -- a stole of terry toweling and frayed materials ...a stole as colourful as the people who brought them and as colourful as the person who wore them.

Pastor Johnson wore that stole, he said, "*as a reminder of his calling to be a servant and as a reminder of those to whom he was called to serve.*"

And as followers of one who loves us so much as to put aside his kingly robe and enter into the dirtiness of our world...

As followers of one who stoops down from his power and glory to put on towel of Servanthood and wash the disciples' feet...

As followers of one who came not to BE served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many...  
... we are called to put on the towel of servanthood, to love one another as God has loved us.

**Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, put it this way:**

*Phil 2:1-8 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! (NIV)*

**"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus"**

This thought brings to my mind the beautiful song "The Servant King".

**From heav'n you came, helpless babe,**  
Entered our world, your glory veiled;  
Not to be served but to serve,  
And give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship, to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears,  
My heavy load he chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
Yet not my will, but yours he said.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship, to the Servant King.*

Come see his hands and his feet,  
The scars that speak of sacrifice;  
Hands that flung stars into space,  
To cruel nails surrendered.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship, to the Servant King.*

So let us learn how to serve,  
And in our lives enthrone him;  
Each other's needs to prefer,  
For it is Christ we're serving.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship, to the Servant King.*

**Love looks like a towel** -- a sign of God's gracious love that wipes away the stain of sin, and that dries our tears.

It looks like a towel because it reminds us that we are to share his love with others ourselves.

**And love looks like prayer.** Sometimes we find that for all sorts of reasons we cannot be the people out there physically serving, that may be because of your usual circumstances, or it may be enforced because of the current situation. With your prayers, those who “can” at this time, will feel upheld, encouraged, more able to do what must be done, and you will be certain that you have a part in their service, as you serve them through the power of your prayers.



### What does love look like?

#### **Love looks like a meal...**

It's that time of the year again when actors and actresses are rewarding themselves with trophies and praise. Some years ago, a film entitled “Babette's Feast” won the Oscar for best foreign film.

It's a story of a French woman - Babette -- who was a chef during the French Revolution. Babette sought shelter from the revolution in a remote, isolated rural village, where she was befriended and welcomed by two sisters.

The sisters were good and godly people; their father had been the religious leader of the community; but since their father's death, the community had experienced great divisions among the group. On the anniversary of his death, Babette, who had just got word that she had come into some money, offered to prepare a meal for the all the villagers. She travelled to get exotic foods and wines, and she spent days preparing the meal.



As the meal progressed, a peace descended upon what was once a conflict-filled group; reconciliation was discovered, friendships renewed and faith restored.

As the sisters went into the kitchen after the meal to thank Babette for her gift to them, they discovered that she had spent all her inheritance for the sake of that meal.

A meal of reconciliation ...

A meal where faith is strengthened,  
friendships renewed ...

A meal where the host gives everything for the sake of those who gather there.

**Such is the meal we celebrate this night.** The Passover meal was the Last Supper which Jesus shared with his disciples. He broke bread with and washed the feet of all the disciples, whilst knowing that one would shortly betray him, and another deny him. He showed love, and forgiveness, and acceptance and obedience. John records the bread and wine at the same time as the feeding of the five thousand (Ch.6) whilst the other gospels do this as at the Passover meal. We are in the other gospels reminded to share in remembrance of Jesus, and in the account in John 6, Jesus himself says “*I am the living bread that came down from heaven.... This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*” (vs.51) As Judas was about to leave the meal

to betray Jesus, Jesus gave him a portion of bread. In that way acknowledging that he knew what was about to happen. He gave of himself willingly.

***As bread is broken, we see yet again what love looks like –***

***Love, which is about to be given ... freely ... For you ... and for me.***

“But hold on” (you might be thinking) at the moment in our present circumstances we are unable to eat together. We can’t even have celebration parties with our loved ones, we can’t get together around the meal table unless we happen to be a part of a family actually living together under the same roof. We can’t go out to our luncheon clubs, or coffee mornings, or just to Costa in town, so sharing food is really difficult in the way we would normally consider sharing it.

With that thought in mind though, I want you to stop for a moment. We **are** in the business of sharing food, but in a very different way just now. The Salvation Army is involved in a huge feeding programme, the likes of which most of us have never seen before!



Every day many Corps give out food parcels, not just to a few people who are in need, but to many, and a good number of those people would not have envisaged a few weeks ago that they would ever need this!

We are shopping for people who are having to self-isolate (and maybe you yourself have benefitted from that?) taking food and leaving it at the front door, in an act of love, an act of communion even. Neighbours are looking after one another, making sure the folk near them have enough. Showing love in their community.

Take a moment to reflect on the fact that these food offerings are acts of love, as we share what others have given to be shared, with those who are in need. Words like generosity, kindness, compassion come to mind, and we don’t have the monopoly on those as Christians, but we do see Christ in the outcome as people are fed.

Surely, this is breaking bread together! And as Christians we do this in His name as scripture commanded us.

***Love looks like a meal, whether physically sharing around a common table, or taking it to those who have need of food.***

***And again, love looks like prayer.*** Your prayers matter, your support and encouragement in that way can never be minimized because prayer has such power, and such a connection to God himself, that as you pray, you partake in a special communion with Him and with others. Not around a table, but around the throne of grace.

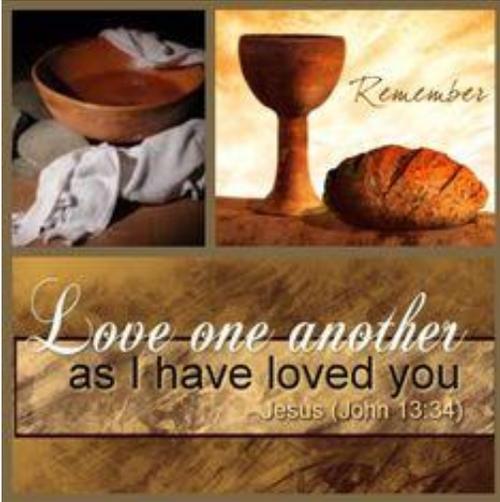
***What does love look like?***

It looks like One who comes looking for us to invite us to receive refreshment and nourishment, saying, "Oh, there you are. I've been looking all over for you."

It looks like One who takes a towel of servanthood, washes away the dirty grime of sin and offers us the clean scent of sweet forgiveness ...

It looks like a meal that nourishes, sustains and refreshes, a meal that feeds us peace and reconciliation....

***Jesus himself answers the question "What does love look like"***



As Jesus takes up the towel of servanthood and washes the disciples' feet, and takes upon himself the dirt of our lives -- our brokenness and our load of guilt and sin --

As Jesus gathers us together and gives his life-blood shed for you and for me, we see what love looks like.

A towel ...

A meal ...

And tomorrow -- A cross

**That's what love looks like!**

May this be our response!

**Lord I come to you** *let my heart be changed, renewed*  
*Flowing from the grace that I found in you*  
*And Lord I've come to know, the weaknesses I see in me*  
*Will be stripped away...By the power of your love*

*Hold me close, let your love surround me*  
*Bring me near, draw me to your side*  
*And as I wait, I'll rise up like the eagle*  
*And I will soar with you, your spirit leads me on*  
*In the power of your love*

*Lord, unveil my eyes, let me see you face to face*  
*The knowledge of your love, as you live in me*  
*Lord, renew my mind, as your will unfolds in my life*  
*In living everyday...By the power of your love*

**Benediction**

Father God, source of all love, on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment: To love one another as he had loved them.

We pray, that by your Holy Spirit you will write this commandment in our hearts.

Go now in peace and may the Lord our God bless you and keep you. May he make his face to shine up and lift up his countenance upon you - both now and for evermore. Amen