

The Rev. Erin Hensley
April 13, 2017
Maundy Thursday: Exodus 12:1-14a; John 13:1-15

Make Us Ready

Tonight we participate in communal rituals of the faithful that stretch back thousands of years, reach us where and are and empower us for the future yet to come. We gather to listen, to wash, to eat, to find ourselves a people on a journey fashioned and freed by God. In our exodus reading, we hear about the hurried meal of our ancestors, an unblemished lamb or goat shared by all in the house. The blood of the sacrificed animal was placed on the mantel of the house, so the angel of Lord passed over the inhabitants as the family of the oppressors were struck down. The meal was eaten quickly. After all, with such an urgent mission from God, there's no time for even the bread to rise. And nothing in that meal was wasted. Our ancestors girded their loins to be able to respond to God's call to go, to be the people they were made to be. Deliverance was just around the corner and they did not want to miss the movement of God. They ate expecting salvation not out of ego but out of deep trust in God's faithfulness to God's promises. So they ate together mindful of the bitterness of the tears of oppression and bondage and holding fast to one another and to the new life to which they were called.

For Christians, Jesus is the lamb that will be sacrificed, will die, and will be raised from the dead for the world. The last supper, the Passover meal that Jesus celebrated with his disciples on the night before he was crucified, echoes with the same these of the exodus of the Israelites. This ritual meal of communion, this feeding on this offering of love and service, is food for our journey as we follow the Way of the cross. We are reminded of Israel's exodus as we contemplate the impending exodus of Jesus.

Just like the Israelites tasted the lamb in anticipation of what would soon happen, we will soon share the meals Jesus' commanded us to share. We will eat a meal of blessed bread and wine, knowing that Jesus holds nothing back-not his body, not his blood- to show us another way to live. We will partake of the Lamb of God who places his life down for the whole world so that we can be redeemed, released, restored to God and one another and all of creation.

The Exodus narrative is not solely the narrative of our Jewish brothers and sisters. This story is ours, too. We all need to be delivered. We all need to be saved from ourselves. And our salvation has come into the world and will not stop for death. He is on a journey. He is about to have his own exodus and because of that every step of every journey need not be in vain. We can walk in love because this night our life together and the very life of the whole world is about to change forever, for always, for the way humanity was meant to be.

Jesus says to his disciples, "Feed on me, drink in me, serve like me." We receive the new commandment or in Latin "*mandatum novum*" from which we get the word Maundy, to love one another and he loves us. The master washes the students feet and we are to share in that action of service and loving relationship. We are to wash one another's feet. Soon we will be invited to take off our shoes, to roll up our sleeves, and see the miles of the journey on our soles. We'll offer some tenderness and care aware that there are miles left to walk together with God's help, aware that there is a bittersweet feast that is set on

this eve of Jesus' crucifixion. We'll hold onto the pew and raise ourselves up to keep sharing in Christ's work. Conscious of the passage Christ provides for all through the power of sin and death into new life, we will go to the table with trust.

We will share in communion, the Passover meal for Christians. Feeding on the real presence of Christ, with feet washed and a heart beating fast for the release that lies ahead, we follow Jesus to the cross. Rather than shaming him, shaming others, shaming ourselves, we stop killing each other. We put down the structures that destroy God's good creation. With the help of Jesus' own exodus, we find our Way, Christ is the Way, into the Promised Land, the very kingdom of God, available here and now and in the life to come.

Please pray with me. Lamb of God, make haste to deliver us. Help us travel light so we can be released to be a people on the move towards your freedom. Lamb of God, you know what deliverance we need. Make us ready for what lies ahead. *Amen.*