

SERMON: 29 March 2018 – Rev Dr Brenda Robson

MAUNDY THURSDAY COMMUNION 2018

“GIVE THANKS” (Matthew 26:26)

Familiar passage, comes round every year – what to say?

But as meditate on passage, God makes something jump out!

Last year – washing the feet – Servant King

2015 – The love of God

This year – Matthew 26:26 – Jesus took bread and he **gave thanks**

I feel that we are to think about thankfulness tonight.

We have so much to be thankful for – yet we take so much for granted.

We don't think about the warmth in our houses until the boiler breaks down

We don't think about the freedom we have to travel where and when we want until someone takes our driving licence away – or until there is so much snow that we can't get out of the house for a few days

We don't think about the blessing of having a job and we might even complain about our daily routine until we are told you aren't working any more

We don't think too much about our health until some part doesn't work or causes us pain.

We have so much to be thankful for in the past and in the present and for what is yet to come

Hymn reminded us “All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above, then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love.”

God wants to receive our praise and our thankfulness.

The psalmist was full of praise and thankfulness to God –

100 – Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise, give thanks to him and praise his name

138 – I will give thanks O Lord with all my heart

118 – Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures for ever

Even in the bad times – David had lots of melancholy and angst – he said at the end of Psalm 43 -

Why are you downcast O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God

Jesus gave thanks before he broke the bread at the last supper and he later took the cup and gave thanks - because he would always have given thanks every time he ate and drank, his disciples also understood that.

There are several places in scripture where Jesus gives thanks to God in prayer

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Luke 10 – when the 72 return having carried out miracles in Jesus name – Jesus was full of joy in the holy spirit and said **“I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden those things (the things of the kingdom) from the wise and learned and given them to little children**

John 6 : 11 – Before feeding the 5000, Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks and then distributed them

Jesus probably did not need to say thanks to God, he and the Father are one, they know each other intimately. But I think he often gave thanks publicly to set an example to us, to show us how to pray, how to relate to God, not to take things for granted but to acknowledge where all our gifts come from

John 11 : 41 – The stone was rolled away from Lazarus’ tomb but before raising him to life Jesus said “Father, I thank you that you have heard me” Then he went on to say “I knew that you always hear me but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here

Jesus knew that we would not always be grateful. Luke tells the story of Jesus meeting 10 lepers on the road to Jerusalem (Luke 17).

The Message - It happened that as he made his way toward Jerusalem, he crossed over the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men, all lepers, met him. They kept their distance but raised their voices, calling out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

14-16 Taking a good look at them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.”

They went, and while still on their way, became clean. One of them, when he realized that he was healed, turned around and came back, shouting his gratitude, glorifying God. He knelt at Jesus’ feet, so grateful. He couldn’t thank him enough—and he was a Samaritan.

17-19 Jesus said, “Were not ten healed? Where are the nine? Can none be found to come back and give glory to God except this outsider?” Then he said to him, “Get up. On your way. Your faith has healed and saved you.”

You can sense Jesus’ disappointment, his weariness with his self centred, ungrateful people. “Were not ten healed? Where are all the others?!”

The 9 lepers had had their lives restored, they were believers, they knew that Jesus could heal them because they called out to him, Jesus, Master, they had thought they would live their lives in exile with leprosy, shunned by everyone but now they could return to their families and their communities restored and clean – Jesus had done a huge thing, he had given them new life – but still they did not take time to thank him.

We might say how bad were they, they had been given so much and were not thankful. But sometimes we behave in the same way.

Fortunately for us, Jesus did not ordain that leprosy would return to the 9 – they were still healed, still saved!

As we come to the Lord's table tonight, we need to come full of thankfulness and praise. And not just for all that God has given us and done for us but especially tonight, thankfulness for the life and death of Jesus.

We cannot be found amongst the nine who were ungrateful but we must stand with the one who said thank you.

We cannot be amongst the ten who ran off but with the one standing at the cross.

Ten disciples ran off, frightened and confused and only John remained at the foot of the cross.

We don't know where they all were – were some already locked away in a room somewhere? Were some heading away from Jerusalem? Did they look back as the sky became dark at 3 o'clock in the afternoon? Perhaps some sneaked back and were mingling on the edge of the crowd, watching from afar. Only John stood at the foot of the cross.

That would have been a great sorrow for Jesus. Did he wonder whether it had all been worth it?

There were several sorrows in his last hours, perhaps he died a little with each one and yet he kept going to the end, to the finish.

In the words of Max Lucado's book "He chose the nails"

We read that Jesus was "troubled in spirit" as he told the disciples around the table at the last supper that one of them would betray him. (John 13 : 21).

But he kept going because it was not finished

Jesus was deeply distressed and troubled in the Garden of Gethsemane – remember as we sit at his table tonight that the garden is only a few hours away – he prayed earnestly and sweated blood –

but he despaired that the disciples fell asleep and could not stay awake with him that one last time.

But he kept going because it was not finished

Judas betrayed him a kiss, Peter betrayed him when he denied him three times.

But he kept going because it was not finished

The trial before Pilate, the trial before Herod, the flogging, the crown of thorns, the walk to Golgotha, nailed to a cross.

“Why don’t you come down from the cross and save yourself?” someone in the crowd shouted. And Jesus could have done that – but he kept going because it was not finished.
It was not finished until his dying breath.

In his last agonising hours he was still ministering to us, full of love and grace.

A final prayer of forgiveness – Father forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing

A final request granted – The thief on the cross said to Jesus “remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus said “today you will be with me in paradise.”

A final request of love – John, look after my mother, she is now your mother

A final confession of his humanity – I am thirsty

A final question about suffering – My God, why have you forsaken me

Psalm 22 : 1 & 2 – My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day but you do not answer, by night am not silent.

Words of pain and distress and despair. But Jesus, on the cross, knew the words that followed –

3 – 5 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed.

A final call of deliverance – Father, into your hands I commend my spirit

A final cry of triumph – it is finished!

It was the most costly statement Jesus ever made – it is finished! - and it was his joy!

In the words of the prophet Isaiah -

Let us thank him.....that he was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering?

Let us thank him.....that he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows?

Let us thank himthat he was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not open his mouth, he was led like a lamb to the slaughter?

Let us thank himthat he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, that the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed?

Let us thank him!

AMEN