



Steädfast / Sumud

FOR JUSTICE IN PALESTINE & ISRAEL

Presented by the Just Love Ministry

The Three Days: MAUNDY THURSDAY

Meditate JOHN 13

¹Now 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. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then 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." ¹²After 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? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

^{31b}"Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Explore

"As churches that seek justice and righteousness in obedience to the commandment of Christ, we must deal with the facts on the ground. ... [B]ased on the foregoing, we must no longer speak in our churches of "peace," or even of the resolution of conflict. We must speak instead of an end to tyranny and injustice. Vocabulary is important. The words we use are important. We are not talking about a struggle between equal forces. ... The way in which the churches of the world deal with injustice in our land will reveal a great deal

about these churches. We do not exaggerate to say that the credibility of the churches and our Christian witness is at stake." - Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, from a speech at the International Conference of Kairos Palestine in Beit Sahour, Palestine, November 2022 (33)

Read the excerpt from the ELCA Social Statement on Peace in God's World on pg 24-25 RSR.

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Reflect

I do not think it was a coincidence that Jesus instituted the Eucharist and reminded us of the greatest commandments amidst the preparations for the passover. During the passover, God, through Moses, invited the Israelites to prepare a feast that would build community, mark them as anointed (set apart), and prepare them for the journey of freedom amidst slavery and injustice (see Exodus 12:1-14). Likewise Jesus invited his followers to practice a meal that would build community, mark them as anointed and prepare them for the journey of freedom amidst the brokenness and injustice of the world. In both cases, God invited God's people to commune together, leaving vengeance to the Lord (Romans 12:17-19), rather than respond by contributing to the ongoing cycles of violence. In both cases, God asked God's people to continue celebrating this meal in remembrance of the great love story between God and God's people.

When God instituted the Passover, he invited the people to celebrate it in remembrance of his faithfulness. Throughout the Torah, God reminded the people to remember that they were slaves in Egypt in their treatment of the most vulnerable, such as orphans, widows and foreigners (Deuteronomy 24:17-18). Why do you think God invited them to remember their enslavement and God's faithfulness?

What happens when we forget God's faithfulness and our legacy of human slavery? How do you see this playing out in Palestine and Israel? In America?

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus invites us to wash one another's feet and commands us to love one another deeply. Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac suggests that in obedience to this command we must speak of an end to tyranny

and injustice. But how? Re-read the invitations to be a disturbing presence, a reconciling presence, a serving presence, and a discerning presence on pg 24-25. What is easiest for you? Hardest? What is easiest for your faith community? Hardest?

Präy

*God of water, bread and wine, You continue to invite and guide us into true communion with you and one another. When we want to isolate and protect ourselves, you invite us to eat together and share your abundance. When we want to control and conquer, you invite us to wash one another's feet. When we want to respond with force and violence, you invite us to remember you and your love and faithfulness. Continue to wash and nourish us until all that we are abides with you and you abide with us and all that you have created. Your kingdom come. **Amen.***

Sing

ELW 708 Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love
ELW 612 Healer of Our Every Ill
Feast of Life by Evan Shelton

The Three Days: GOOD FRIDAY

Meditate **ISAIAH 52:13 - 53:12**

¹³See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. ¹⁴Just as there were many who were astonished at him—so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals—¹⁵so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

^{53:1}Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ²For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.

HEBREWS 10:15-25

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, ¹⁶ “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds,” ¹⁷ she also adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” ¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. ¹⁹ Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Explore

In recent years, Christian talk of “peace” (and of the “Israeli-Palestinian conflict”) in the current political context has too often ignored or dismissed the real power difference between the state of Israel and the people of Palestine. Too often, Israelis and Palestinians are portrayed as two groups of people of roughly equal power and agency, locked in an intractable personal conflict, who need “reconciliation.” Or, “peace” is determined by the cessation of violence, regardless of whether underlying structures of inequality are changed.

When “peace” is used as a central organizing principle in these ways, then the rhetoric of peace itself normalizes the occupation by ignoring it completely or by implicitly treating it as a side product or consequence of conflict (“the walls can come down when Palestinians stop using violence”) rather than a cause of conflict (“the walls create a system of injustice that elicits violence as one response”). When “both sides” are urged to work for peace, this places an impossible onus for change on an occupied people who do not have this power. Only the state of Israel can end the occupation and dismantle its unjust

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Explore CONTINUED

structures. For the Palestinians we interviewed, “peace” language has become another tool of the occupation by framing the issue as one of personal conflict rather than systemic injustice.

This is not to say that peacemaking is not the goal. The above excerpt from the 1995 ELCA social statement *For Peace in God’s World* defines *Christian peacemaking as a multifaceted disturbing, reconciling, serving and deliberating presence* in the world. This fuller sense of what it means

to work for peace has guided, and will continue to guide, the ELCA in its engagement in Palestine and Israel, as in every part of the world where this church is called into relationships of accompaniment, awareness-raising and advocacy. Yet Palestinian theologians living under occupation caution us to remember that justice is the root of peace, not the reverse. As the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. also observed, “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.” (Peace Not Walls Review, Summary, and Recommendations, p. 26)

Reflect

The prophet Isaiah boldly and firmly announces that God’s servant “shall startle many nations” and will silence many kings “for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.” (Is 52:15)

The author of the letter to the Hebrews presents to us Jesus, the one in whom we have a new covenant. The “blood of Jesus” paves the way for a new creation (Heb 10:19-20), and emboldens us to place our full trust in God. In the One who was crucified for us we find meaning for our lives and a model to follow. Jesus’ forgiving heart, loves us not in spite of but because of our sin. He embraces our sin and brings it to the cross for redemption. Looking at him crucified and the ultimate sacrifice he made on our behalf, we can surely “provoke one another to love and good deeds.” (v. 24)

And what is *love* if not imitation of Christ? What kind of love if not what God has for all humanity, for all that God has created? And what are the good deeds if not works of justice, that is what is just in the eyes of God, what aligns with God’s primordial intention?

In his commentary to the letter to the Galatians, St. Augustine writes: “Christ is formed in those who receive Christ’s mold, who cling to him in spiritual love. By imitating him they become, as far as is possible to their condition, what Christ is. John says: “Those who remain in Christ should walk as he did.” (1 John 2:6)

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Reflect CONTINUED

Discussion Questions

1. In which way is your heart troubled at the scene of Christ on the cross?
2. In which way is your heart gladdened at the scene of Christ on the cross?
3. What human sin has nailed him to the cross? What sin has Christ picked up and embraced for the purpose of carrying it to the cross?
4. How is Christ's death a reflection of what is happening on the ground in Palestine?
5. What does Christ's death call us to emulate?

Pray

*Eternal God, Mother of a new humanity born of the sacrifice of Christ, receive our contrition and bless us with renewed resolution to embrace the suffering world as Christ did. Visit us anew with your Holy Spirit of justice and peace, and empower us to respond boldly to your call to show love and engage in doing good deeds unconcerned for our life. **Amen.***

Sing

ELW 733 Great is Thy Faithfulness

ELW 613 Thy Holy Wings

ELW 324 In the Cross of Christ I Glory

ACS 1042 May this Church be Like a Tree?

The Three Days: EASTER SUNDAY

Meditate **ISAIAH 25:6-10**

⁶On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. ⁷And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the covering that is spread over all nations; ⁸he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. ⁹It will be said on that day, "See, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." ¹⁰For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.

MARK 16:1-8

¹When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint [Jesus' body]. ²And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" ⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Explore

Freed by the transformative life, death and resurrection of Christ, we are called to Awareness, Advocacy and Accompaniment with our partners in the Holy Land and in the United States.

Accompaniment with our companion church in the Holy Land, the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land](#) (ELCJHL), and with Jewish and Muslim siblings and leaders through the [Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land](#) and the [National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East](#).

Advocacy for a negotiated resolution to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and to ongoing acts of violence. You can do this by calling for:

- Equal human rights and human dignity for all people in the Holy Land.
- An end to Israeli settlement building and the occupation of Palestinian land, both of which violate international laws.
- A viable political solution for sharing of the land.
- Individuals to build the Palestinian economy by investing in its products and, through selective purchasing, to avoid products made in Israeli settlements that are illegally built on Palestinian land.
- An examination of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S.

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Explore CONTINUED

and international human rights law, and a possible withholding of aid for failing to comply with those laws.

Awareness-raising through upcoming trips to the Holy Land, connecting ELCA congregations with neighbors concerned about the future of Palestine and Israel, and providing resources (worship materials, maps, historical background, trip planning ideas, church policy, etc.).

Reflect

I have always had a strange affinity to Mark's gospel, maybe because the women's response to this stranger's announcement regarding Jesus' resurrections seemed so much more authentic to me, "they fled from the tomb, seized by terror and amazement, and said nothing to anyone." Obvious, even to the hearer's of Mark's gospel and the early readers, that clearly, eventually, the women told someone, otherwise how could this have been included in the gospel? Yet there is something authentically human about their initial response, fleeing, in terror and amazement, and keeping it to themselves, pondering the mystery of it all in their hearts, like Jesus' mother did, on first hearing of God's plan for her and her son.

After all, in the midst of this powerful announcement that Jesus had been raised after such horrific violence and suffering, nothing much had changed. Empire and religion continued to conspire all around the women in Judea and Galilee reeking violence and suffering among so many. It took a while, like yeast in bread, for the news and appearances of the risen Lord to inspire people that there was indeed life, justice and community being sown and sprouting amidst the brokenness and destruction. But inspire it did and within months these women and the other disciples became bold in their proclamation and witness of the hope, healing and restoration that God has worked in Jesus and was working in and through them amidst the evil powers and principalities of their time. The oppressive powers of religion and empire continue to sow devastation and destruction in the Holy Land but God is sowing hope, healing, resurrection and reconciliation amidst death and seeming hopelessness. We, like the women, are called to ponder what God is doing until we too become bold witnesses to God's vision of restoration and reconciliation where all peoples enjoy "a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear", hosted by God's own self.

Through Sumud, the ELCA supports a viable, contiguous Palestinian state; a secure Israeli state at peace with its Arab neighbors; and a shared Jerusalem with equal access and rights for Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Read more: <https://www.elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/peace-not-walls>

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Reflect CONTINUED

- Where/how have you seen God work hope, healing, resurrection and reconciliation amidst death and seeming hopelessness?
- Have you ever felt terror at the brokenness around you but amazed and inspired by what God was doing? How did you ultimately respond? What happens when we overcome our fear and share the stories of God's redemption in our lives?
- How are you being called and inspired to be bold in witnessing to God's reconciliation and healing amidst the current destruction and apparent hopelessness in the Holy Land? Which commitment is God calling you to start with: accompaniment, advocacy and/or awareness?

Pray

*God of hope in the midst of hopelessness, we pray for the people of Palestine and Israel, who are your beloved ones. Through your prophet Jeremiah, you spoke the truth to oppressive powers: "They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace." In your son Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem and the failure of the world to "know the things that make for peace." Truly, in this moment all the people of the Holy Land know this lack of peace, which is rooted in a lack of justice. We pray for all those in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel who are mourning the loss of life, those who are injured and traumatized, and those who are working to provide care in these devastated communities. We pray for an end to this present war and its violence, for an immediate ceasefire and the return of all hostages and prisoners held without charges. And we pray for a resolution that addresses the root causes of conflict, including an end to 75-plus years of an occupation that deprives whole Palestinian communities of human rights, freedom, and dignity. For the peace that is not the absence of tension but the presence of justice, we pray. For the peace Jesus gives to us, that is not as the world gives, we pray. For a new day, in which all your beloved children are treated as precious and worthy of care, we pray. In the name of the one who died in solidarity with the suffering and rose to defeat the powers of death, Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen.***

This prayer was developed by Rev. Dr. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni, Theologian in Residence, Middle East/North Africa desk, ELCA, and her team. Please consider using it in your individual and congregation prayers throughout the Easter season and/or indefinitely until justice rolls down like water and righteousness an ever-flowing stream in Palestine and Israel.

Sing

Worship & Praise 15 Be Bold, Be Strong
ACS 933 Day of Delight and Beauty Unbounded
ELW 390 The Risen Christ