



ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
**LENT WORSHIP @ HOME**  
**HOLY VESSELS:**  
**A LENTEN SEASON OF RECOVERY**

[www.zionuccindy.net/worshipathome](http://www.zionuccindy.net/worshipathome)

*Holy Vessels: A Season of Recovery*  
*Maundy Thursday*  
April 1, 2021

*Prepare: For this service you are invited to prepare a small bowl of oil for an anointing, a bowl of warm water and a wash cloth to wash your hands and feet, and elements for communion (anything you have on hand will do just fine).*

**PRELUDE**

*Prayer in the Garden*

**GATHERING**

*Vessels, holy and whole  
Broken, needing the One  
Open, body and soul  
Healer, come.*

*Lenten Anthem: "Holy Vessels"*

*Leader:* Our worship tonight invites us to consider a commission from Christ to his disciples: to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons. These are the very things his disciples have seen him do and that we have sought to witness for our own lives in this Lenten season of recovery. What will *we* do with this commission? How will we address ongoing pain with hope and conviction even though we, ourselves, are "healed and yet still healing?"

*Vessels, holy and whole  
Broken, needing the One  
Open, body and soul  
Healer, come.*

## **READING: CALL TO SERVE**

*Matthew 10: 1-8*

*Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.*

*These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.*

**Reflect:** Jesus had been teaching, healing, touching and transforming lives for three years. His presence in the midst of suffering had offered hope to so many. And yet his ways had also challenged the power of privilege and stirred up all kinds of trouble. As we have seen in our Lenten journey, his actions had crossed boundaries of stigma in so many ways. When healing was needed, no one was left outside of compassion, but some could not accept this. Touching the “untouchables,” mixing with folk outside or below his status, raising up the faith of “outsiders and nobodies” had gotten attention. “The last shall be first” was not sitting well with the “first” of society, the rulers and leaders of Jesus’ day. His popularity was evident the day he and his disciples set foot in Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. Those in seats of power who wanted to keep the peace—even an unjust, unholy, unfair, unseeing peace—were all talking about “the problem.” Crowds where Jesus was teaching in Jerusalem were infiltrated by leaders seeking to catch him in controversy. Time and again, Jesus answered with truth and faith, leaving the naysayers speechless. On this Maundy Thursday, we remember how far Jesus would go to serve those in need of healing. As his disciples, are we willing to answer his call to us to serve and bring healing to this world?

## **SONG**

*What Wondrous Love, Zion Virtual Choir*

## **READING: ANOINTED IN LOVE**

*Matthew 26: 6-13*

*Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the*

*money given to the poor.” But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”*

## **FIRST RITUAL ACTION: ANOINTING**

**Reflect:** Oil was used in many ways by ancient peoples. Mixed with various herbal properties, it served as healing balm, bringing increased blood flow and salve to the body. It was used in practical purposes as well, to soften dry, rough skin and to offer earthy fragrance. And it was used as an agent of significance in many rituals.

The story of the woman with the alabaster jar of oil is a symbolic ritual action of great power. The pouring of oil on Jesus’ head stood in the traditions of anointing leaders—Kings to be specific—on the head. Many of the symbols in the story of Holy Week point to the sovereignty of Jesus... most of them carried out by unlikely and so-called “unsanctioned” people. This ritual of oil on the head of Jesus was carried out by an unnamed woman whose action of love, devotion, and the clear message that this Teacher was her Sovereign forever, got angry reactions even from those who claimed to love Jesus most. Are we, like those first disciples, in danger of withholding our resources of extravagant love? Do we hesitate to proclaim the sovereignty—the reign—of love and justice, equity and relief, healing and wholeness even as we proclaim to be disciples of the one who is Love itself?

Then Jesus turns the meaning of her anointing act on its head, so to speak. He recalls another use of oil on the body common in that time... that of embalming the dead. This must have been a shock to the disciples beyond even the shock they had already expressed. His message was clear: now was not the time to worry about the treasury. The True Treasure was in relationship, the one they had right before them, right now.

And so our first ritual action for tonight is anointing. I invite you to dip your fingers in the bowl of oil and place your hand on the top of your own head if you are on your own this evening. Or if you are with others, you may choose to place your hands on each other’s heads in turn. Allow your hand to rest there for a few moments. As you do so, I invite you to think of the people whose extravagant love has been poured out upon you, offering you care in the midst of your own healing

journey. Feel that care as affirmation of your worth. Know that this kind of love is always and already available to you through relationship with the Divine One. Take your time as the music plays. Allow the warmth of the hand to melt into your being, filling you with assurance that the Holy Presence moves with warmth and light within your Holy Vessel, no matter how broken or far from life you feel. You are part of the Reign of Love in this world. Accept this anointing so that you might also offer this anointing, this healing, wherever it is needed.

## SONG

*There is a Balm in Gilead, Zion Virtual Choir*

## READING: HE LOVED THEM TO THE END

*John 13:1-20*

Now 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. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then 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. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus 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.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

After 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? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfil the scripture, "The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am

he. Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.'

## **RITUAL ACTION: TENDER CARE**

**Reflect:** We turn to the Gospel of John to hear this beautiful and intimate story of Jesus bowing down to serve his disciples as they gathered to break bread. We know that the customary washing of feet upon arrival to one's home took on a particular significance that night. Not only practical but symbolic, the washing of feet in the ancient world indicated status, with servants washing the feet of their masters, pupils washing the feet of their teachers, children and wives washing the feet of the "man of the house." Jesus was all these things of reverence and honor to those gathered that night. And yet we know he washed *their* feet, rejecting the norms and indicating a new order of things, a new way to honor one another regardless of status. We know that this act of tending to the feet was done to express the highest form of respect and honor in the ancient world.

And so our second ritual action this evening follows in this tradition. You are invited to wash your hands and your feet. If there are others in your household worshipping with you this night, you are invited to wash each other's hands and feet.

## **SONG**

*Will You Let Me Be Your Servant*

## **READING: THE SUPPER**

*Matthew 26: 20-29*

*When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?" He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so."*

*While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

## **RITUAL ACTION: COMMUNION**

**Our Invitation**—In this sacred season of Lent, we remember how far God’s love would go to bring healing to our brokenness. Today we come before God as we are, with all our brokenness and sharp edges, with those parts of us that long for restoration and renewal. It is at Christ’s table where we can encounter the abundance of God’s healing love that has been so freely given.

### **SONG**

*One Bread, One Body*, Zion Virtual Choir

### **We Prepare Our Hearts by Confessing Our Sins**

Wellspring of Love, Source of Compassion, Teacher of Truth, you call us to wash the feet of others as you have washed ours, yet we are often unwilling to kneel at the feet of our friends, preferring to be served rather than to serve. You invite us to join all of creation at your feast, yet we are unwilling to make room at our table for someone we do not know. You pour yourself out for the sake of the whole world, yet we are often unwilling to let go of our selfish desires. Forgive us and free us from our unwillingness to find our true life as the body of Christ—a body given for the healing of the world. Amen.~

**Assurance of Grace:** Hear the good news: God washes our souls with love and grace before we even ask. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.~

**The Words of Institution**—We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, and on the eve of death, Jesus gathered the disciples for the feast of Passover. Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples saying: ‘This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, Jesus also took the cup after supper, saying: ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ By eating this bread and drinking this cup, we proclaim Christ’s death and celebrate Christ’s resurrection, and await Christ’s coming again.+

**Blessing Our Meal**—Holy Spirit, pour out your presence into this bread and into this cup that they might be a visible sign of your invisible grace. Even though we gather from a distance, may our moments at this table remind us of the richness of the Body of Christ, as this sacred meal unites us as one. Bless this

meal that it may tend to our wounds, heal our spirits, and energize us for the work to which you have called us. Amen.

**We Share the Bread and the Cup** – *(Taking the bread)* Take and eat, this is Christ's body broken for you. *(Taking the cup)* Take and drink, this is Christ's blood shed for you and the forgiveness of sins.

**We Give Thanks**— Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior's presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ's body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our redeemer. Amen.'

## **SONG**

*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

## **COMMISSION**

Tonight, we have been anointed with healing balm, we have been cleansed with living water, we have been fed by Christ's own body. Having known God's love poured out in Jesus Christ, go forth this night to serve one another with healing love as Christ first served us.

## **POSTLUDE**

*Amazing Grace*

Worship Notes: ~Scifres, Mary; Beu, B. J.. The Abingdon Worship Annual 2021 (p. 83). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition. 'UCC Book of Worship. +UCC Worship Ways. *Worship series design and original music* ©Worship Design Studio, used with permission. [www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels).