



Leaning into the Heart of the Holy

2016 Lenten Devotions

Maundy Thursday

March 24, 2016

In memory of poet Ann Weems who died last week at the age of 81, her poem,

Holy Week

Holy is the week . . .

Holy, consecrated, belonging to God . . .

We move from hosannas to horror

with the predictable ease

of those who know not what they do.

Our hosannas sung,

our palms waved,

let us go with passion into this week.

It is a time to curse fig trees that do not yield fruit.

It is a time to cleanse our temples of any blasphemy.

It is a time to greet Jesus as the Lord's Anointed One,

to lavishly break our alabaster

and pour perfume out for him

without counting the cost.

It is a time for preparation . . .

The time to give thanks and break bread is upon us.

The time to give thanks and drink of the cup is imminent.

Eat, drink, remember:

On this night of nights, each one must ask,

as we dip our bread in the wine,

"Is it I?"

And on the darkest of days each of us must stand

beneath the tree

and watch the dying

if we are to be there

when the stone is rolled away.

The only road to Easter morning

is through the unrelenting shadows of that Friday.

Only then will the alleluias be sung;

only then will the dancing begin.

Prayer:

You call us to be your voices in this world
and we stay silent.

You call us to be your hands in this world
and we keep them hidden.

You call us to be your feet in this world
and we go our own way.

When we meet those who are doubting
and say nothing, forgive us.

When we meet those who need your touch
and do nothing, forgive us.

When we are called to take up your cross
and carry nothing, forgive us.

Breathe life into these bones

bring freedom to these lives

that we might declare

with heart and soul and voice

that you are our Lord and our God. Amen

–John Birch

Exodus 12:1-14

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

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."

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little 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.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."