

**Maundy Thursday- John 13:1-17, 31b-35**  
**St Andrew's Episcopal Church - Sedona, AZ**

**Joyfully Embodying the New Commandment**

*Teach song:*

*"This is my commandment that you love one another, that your joy may be full."*

For the last two years, I began the Maundy Thursday service by singing this song with my faith community. It's a fun song that is relatively easy to teach and learn. The words and the music help us to feel joyful in community – they inspire us to love one another – to embody Jesus' new *mandatum* or mandate: "To love one another as I have loved you."

As a musician, I feel refreshed by music. I love to sing, and sometimes I carry a tune in my head or hum it to myself while working. I also feel a sense of joy in community when I make music with other vocalists and instrumentalists. There is a group that started in the Bay Area called "Music that Makes Community." Leaders teach songs using paperless music, just we did a few minutes ago. They use hand signals to help people know when to sing and when to listen. They invite you to move naturally with the rhythm and tempo of the music. It's probably not how most of us were taught to sing in church. Especially in The Episcopal Church! But it is an intuitive way to share our love of God and our love of life - through music in community.

Even though music nourishes our hearts, and souls, and sense of community, our bodies still needs nourishment through food and drink. As a human being, Jesus knew how easy it was to neglect taking care of ourselves when we are distracted by the busy-ness of our lives: of being overly tired from juggling multiple responsibilities of caregiving for spouses, children, and parents; of trying to earn a decent living to provide for life's basic necessities. Jesus also knew what it was like to feel so overwhelmed by grief that our senses can be numbed to the point that we can forget to eat and drink and stay connected with our support systems. He probably knew from experience what it means to be "Hangry" – and to try not to become simultaneously Hungry-Angry-Lonely-and Tired.

Jesus knew how to nourish the belly through food and drink and how to nurture the soul through prayer, and meditation, and Sabbath. And, he didn't shy away from modeling self-care for his followers. So on the last night that Jesus was with his friends, he celebrated their life together by praying and eating and drinking. He embodied for them memorable models of hospitality, servanthood, and community. He knew that sometimes even at gatherings of friends and family members, there are disagreements, hurt feelings, and bruised egos. He knew that situations can get out of hand; that things can be said and done in anger, jealousy, or bitterness. Jesus knows what it's like to have a friend or relative end up deserting us or betraying our trust even in our

deepest darkest hour of need. He knows how rumors can feed on insecurities and fears. He knows how fear can overpower trust.

Even though Jesus knows he is going to be denied and betrayed and crucified, he still gathers with his friends out of a deep sense of love. He shares a simple meal with them. He models servanthood by washing their feet. He uses elements from their common life and heightens their senses and memories through the sight of gathered friends, the scent of wine, the taste of bread, the sound of water, and the touch of gentle hands and a soft towel. He reminds them and us what is important in life – to love one another as he loves us. He reminds us to trust that God will wipe away not only our sorrows and tears, but our hunger for kindness and compassion. He reminds us to trust in the power of love – the love of God and the love of our neighbor. Jesus reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Even a friend’s denial or an enemy’s betrayal. Jesus loves his own until the end...knowing full well the mixed motives of his closest followers.

As followers of Jesus, we are invited to keep coming to the Table, and to keep passing the cup to one another. The cup of salvation that overflows with God’s abundant love. There is more than enough to fill our bellies, and our hearts and our souls when each one of us embodies the New Commandment of Jesus - to love one another as he loves us.

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