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Prelude

Jesus spent his life teaching us the meaning of love. Through word and deed Jesus showed us how to love God and to love one another. He fed the hungry. He healed the sick. He invited the women and the children and the tax collectors and the sinners to come to his table. He broke bread with the least and the lost and shared the cup of redemption with them all. He crossed boundaries of race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, and class. He challenged religious authority, and he scoffed at pomposity and self-absorbed grandeur. He called out the hypocrites. He admonished the scribes and the Pharisees for their hardened hearts. He brought a simple message: Love God, love yourself, and love one another.

We gather in the name of Jesus and remember the way that he showed us. We gather to remember not just his death, but his life.

Hymn: As We Gather at Your Table (457)

The way of Jesus goes through the cross, but we are not there yet. It is close. We can see its shadow. We can feel the cold, dark, night. We know that the enemies of God are conspiring. They have had enough of him. He threatens their comfort. He threatens their way of life. He threatens their power. They will come for him. First though, we will gather. We gather with Jesus and his closest friends. We gather with those that called him teacher, Rabbi, friend. We gather for the Passover meal, to remember that God saved the people from slavery. God saved once. God saves forevermore.

God saved the Israelites at Passover, and revealed that it is God who reigns, not the Pharaoh. Our God saved once. God saves forevermore.

Hymn: Go Down Moses

When Israel was in Egypt's land

"Let my people go."

oppressed so hard they could not stand

"Let my people go."

Go down Moses, way down to Egypt's land.

Tell old Pharaoh **"Let me people go."**

Even as they were sharing this sacred meal together, the disciples were not of one heart. Jesus knew that he was asking much from these men, and he knew that they would fail him. Judas had already agreed to betray Jesus to the religious authorities. Was he angry at some slight? Was he disappointed that Jesus would not raise an army against the Romans? Was he upset with the value of the oil that the woman "wasted" when she anointed Jesus? We will never know Judas' heart, but Jesus knew that he would be betrayed. And what did Jesus do with the man that would betray him? He broke bread with him. All of the disciples were deeply saddened, and they asked:

I would never betray you, Lord. It's not me, is it?

On the night in which Jesus was betrayed by his friend, he took the bread, gave thanks to God, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to God, gave it to his disciples and said, "Drink from this all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink of it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and the cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by Christ's blood.

Communion (466)

**Eat this bread, drink this cup,
come to me and never be hungry.
Eat this bread, drink this cup,
trust in me and you will not thirst.**

When the holy meal had been shared, the disciples began to argue over which one would be the greatest. Even here, at the end of their time together, they did not seem to understand what Jesus had been teaching them all along. He reminded them that to be great in the Kingdom of God meant to serve. After Jesus' talk of betrayal, the disciples' argument, and Jesus' rebuke of them, the disciples seemed to be growing anxious. Peter proclaimed:

“Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

And Jesus replied, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you have denied three times that you know me.”

Music Offering: Shadows Gather, Deep and Cold

Afterwards, Jesus led his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. He asked them to pray for him, for he wanted to be alone. He asked his friends to keep watch, but they kept falling asleep. He prayed for another way out. He prayed in anguish. He prayed as a man who could feel pain, who would be hurt by betrayal, who would be scarred by the scourge, and would bleed when nails were driven into his arms and legs. He prayed as a man who knew that if he followed God's will, he would be charged, convicted, mocked, humiliated, abandoned, and nailed to a cross. Knowing all of this

full well he prayed, “Not my will, but yours.” Then he stood up for all that he had lived for. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come to into the time of trial”

Judas said to Jesus, “Rabbi” and kissed him. Then they came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him.

Hymn: Go to Dark Gethsemane (133)

There was a brief skirmish at the arrest, but his disciples quickly scattered. Peter, who had only hours before promised to go with Jesus to prison, even death, followed from a distance. During the trial, Peter remained hidden in the shadows. First a servant girl saw him and said, “This man was also with him.”

“Woman, I do not know him.”

A little later someone else, on seeing him said, “You also are one of them.”

“Man, I am not.”

Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, “Surely this man was with him; for he is a Galilean.”

“I do not know what you are talking about. I do not know Jesus.”

At that moment, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him, and he wept bitterly.

Hymn: Saviour Again to Your Dear Name (426)

Commissioning

Anthem: The Servant Song

Benediction

Hymn: God Be With You 'til We Meet Again (422)

Postlude