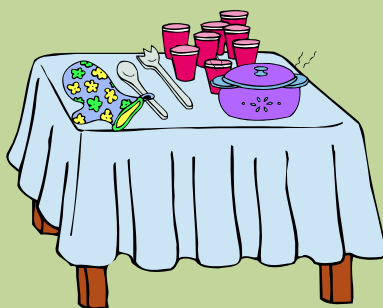


# Round The Meal Table

*[A meditation for Holy Week]*



*The congregation are seated around a central table covered with a white cloth and on which are laid, a Bible, a Cross, a bottle of perfume and a plate containing broken pieces of bread.*

## **Introduction**

### **Leader:**

God, how wonderful is your constant love! We feast on the abundant food you provide. You are the source of all life. We are guests at your table.

- Reader 1** All the world comes to the meal table  
**Reader 2** or gathers round the family food bowl.  
**Reader 1** The meal table is the place to be refreshed, renewed and strengthened  
**Reader 2** the place where families meet together to share their life;  
**Reader 1** their pains and pleasures; their cares and dreams.  
**Reader 2** The meal table is the place of hospitality and welcome.  
**Reader 1** It brings family and community together.

### **Leader**

Throughout the story of Jesus, we often find him at the meal table; at dinner parties; breakfasts; wedding feasts, sitting with religious leaders; with so-called sinners and outcasts; with family and friends. His final meals with his disciples before and after the Cross, are often remembered and re-enacted as times of true fellowship. When the Lord's Supper was instituted all those other meals must have been in mind. As Jesus' followers remembered him, their God and Saviour, they were glad to be one family with him.

### **Hymn**

#### **Prayer**

**[Leader]**

God, our Father, we meet around a table to remember Jesus and the events of that week which ended with the Cross and his Resurrection. Here, we seek refreshment and renewal from him who promised to be nourishment for our spiritual life.

Throughout this week, give us  
a more real awareness of his presence;  
a deeper sense of what it means to be your family;  
a greater desire to live as those who always have a place at your table.

**Amen**

### **Narrative Reading**

NARRATOR 1

Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany

NARRATOR 2

The home of Lazarus, the man he had raised from death.

NARRATOR 1

They prepared a dinner for him there,

NARRATOR 2

Which Martha helped to serve;

NARRATOR 1

Lazarus was one of those who were sitting at the table with Jesus. Then Mary took a half litre of a very expensive perfume

NARRATOR 2

Made of pure nard.

NARRATOR 1

She poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair.

NARRATOR 2

The sweet smell of the perfume filled the whole house.

NARRATOR 1

One of Jesus' disciples, Judas Iscariot –

NARRATOR 2

- the one who was going to betray him – said,

JUDAS

Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins, and the money given to the poor?

NARRATOR 2

He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief.

NARRATOR 1

He carried the money bag and would help himself from it.

NARRATOR 2

But Jesus said;

JESUS

Leave her alone! Let her keep what she has for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor people with you, but you will not always have me.

NARRATOR 1

A large number of people heard that Jesus was at Bethany, so they went there,

NARRATOR 2

Not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from death.

NARRATOR 1

The chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus too, because on his account many Jews were rejecting them and believing in Jesus.

*John 12.1-11*

## **Meditation - Thinking in the stillness**

### **Reader 3**

Judas had a point though! That jar of perfume was the price of a year's wages for a labourer! Perhaps Mary didn't use it all, but even what she did pour out would have made a big difference for a lot of hungry people. They say God takes the side of the poor, but when Judas did that they called him a thief!

### **Reader 4**

Yes, Judas had a point, but Jesus had a more important one. Remember when he was tempted in the wilderness. The devil said, *Turn stones into bread. Feed the hungry and they'll love you!* But Jesus pointed to the scripture which says, *Man does not live by bread alone ...'* There is something more important than food for the body. At this meal table Jesus saw Mary's over-the-top gesture of loving gratitude as highlighting his love and his death for the sins of the world - ours too. When we are right with God and full of his Spirit, the hungry will never be forgotten. The Church saw that from the very beginning. Feeding the poor was a natural outcome of life in Christ.

*Time for quiet reflection*

## Narrative Reading

Luke 24. 13-32

NARRATOR 1

On resurrection day two of Jesus' followers were going to a village named Emmaus,

NARRATOR 2

About eleven kilometres from Jerusalem.

NARRATOR 1

They were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them.

NARRATOR 2

They saw him, but somehow did not recognise him.

NARRATOR 1

Jesus said to them,

JESUS

What are you talking about to each other as you walk along?

NARRATOR 1

They stood still with sad faces. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him,

CLEOPAS

Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have been happening there these last few days?

NARRATOR 2

Jesus asked,

JESUS

What things?

CLEOPAS

The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth. This man was a prophet and was considered by God and by all the people to be powerful in everything he said and did.

FOLLOWER 2

Our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and he was crucified.

CLEOPAS

We had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free!

FOLLOWER 2

Besides all that, this is now the third day since it happened. Some of the women of our group surprised us; they went at dawn to the tomb, but could not find his body.

CLEOPAS

They came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive.

Some of our group went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women had said.

FOLLOWER 2

But they did not see him.

NARRATOR 1

Then Jesus said to them,

JESUS

How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?

NARRATOR 2

Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of the prophets.

NARRATOR 1

As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he was going farther; but they held him back, saying,

FOLLOWER 2

Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark.

NARRATOR 1

So he went in to stay with them.

NARRATOR 2

He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them.

NARRATOR 1

Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other,

CLEOPAS

Wasn't it like a fire burning in us,

FOLLOWER 2

when he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?

## **Meditation - Thinking in the stillness**

### **Reader 5**

I can't understand how Cleopas and his friend – or was it his wife – did not recognise Jesus. I suppose they were not expecting him. No-one would know how he appeared in his resurrection body. But what a good thing they invited him to stay. Just imagine what they – and we – would have missed.

### **Reader 6**

Yes, they would have missed seeing him and sharing bread with him. I think it was that which told them who it was – the bread, or maybe the nail-marks in his hands as he broke it. Because they invited him to stay they were able to have their faith proved and be caught up in the glow and excitement of what God had done in Jesus through the Cross and resurrection. Faith is really about asking him in – giving him a place at our table. That will not mean we will be able to fully explain the meaning of Jesus' sacrifice, but we will be sure of him being with us – our friend – our saviour – our God!!

*Time for quiet reflection*

## **Sharing Perfume and Bread**

### **Leader**

The disciples remembered Jesus as he told them, whenever they broke bread together. Perhaps some of them remembered him in the scent of nard – the perfume of thankful love.

*[Appropriate music while the plate of bread is passed round for all to share and then one of the readers puts a dab or spray of perfume on the back of each person's hand,]*

## **Prayer**

**[Leader]**

*A time of quiet;*

*To remember all who share meals today;*

*Families in places of peace and of war;*

*National and international leaders;*

*Christians at the Lord's Table;*

*Those who offer hospitality to their neighbours and share their table with the poor and people in need;*

*Those who long to be invited to someone's table, and to the Lord's Table of life with all its riches.*

Lord, our God, as we share the celebration of these special days before Easter.

May our faith grow deeper;

Our love widen to embrace those in need;

Our joy in your presence be exciting and challenging.

So, may we live as those who come to your table of good things, and share its hospitality with others until we are all united with Jesus in the heavenly feast.

**Amen**

## **Hymn**

### **An After Thought**

#### **Reader 7**

It is evening in a small African township. A family of mother, father and six children share food from the bowl on the table of their one-room home. It's rice and beans again! There's smiles and laughter again.

#### **Reader 8**

Round the corner an alley leads to a small bar where young men sit together, eating and drinking from the bottles on the bench beside them. They stretch their legs across an open drain and share the day's news with each other.

#### **Reader 7**

Just a few streets away a family gather with friends in a large room, wide open to the breeze clattering through palm leaves. They sit around a table spread with comparative plenty as they talk of changing times and plan a daughter's home-coming.

#### **Reader 8**

Below them a teenager sits alone on the doorstep. She wipes bread round an empty bowl. It is all that is left after feeding her younger brothers. Mother die of AIDS last year.

#### **Reader 7**

A small group of Christian young people sit together in front of a table in the church. They have come to listen to Bible reading and to share bread and wine,

#### **Reader 8**

And Jesus is there **too!**

**Blessing**  
**[Leader]**

May God who spreads a table before us and invites us to share his feast of life, excite us  
to join him as we journey to the Cross,  
and to bring others to know Jesus who is  
host at the table  
the Risen Lord of life.

**Amen**