

- Maundy Thursday worship service, April 3rd, 1980, Duke Chapel. (organ music) (organ music) (organ music) (ambient chatter) (organ music) ♪ Let thy holy presence come upon us ♪ ♪ We pray ♪ ♪ Thy holy presence ♪ (organ and choral music)

- When we gather to praise God, we remember that we are the people of God, who have preferred our wills to the divine will. Accepting the power God offers us to become new persons in Christ, let us confess our sin before God and before one another. Let us pray. Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We pray you, of your mercy, forgive what we have been, amend what we are, direct what we shall be, that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen. Hear the good news. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That is God's own proof of his love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

- In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God, amen.

- Let us pray. Prepare our hearts, O Lord, to accept your word. Silence in us any voice but your own, that hearing, we may also obey your will. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen. The Old Testament lesson is from the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, verses 31 through 34. "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, "'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel "'and the house of Judah, not like the covenant "'which I made with their fathers "'when I took them by the hand to bring them "'out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, "'though I was their husband,' says the Lord. "'But this is the covenant which I will make "'with the house of Israel after those days,' says the Lord. "'I will put my law within them, "'and I will write it upon their hearts, "'and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. "'And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor "'and each his brother or sister, saying, "Know the Lord." "'For they shall all know me, from the least of them "'to the greatest,' says the Lord. "'For I will forgive their iniquity, "'and I will remember their sin no more.'" The Epistle lesson is from the first Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, Chapter 11, verses 23 through 26. "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, "that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed "took bread, and when he had given thanks "he broke it and said, 'This is my body which is for you. "'Do this in remembrance of me.'" "In the same way also 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. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, "you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Here ends the reading from the Epistle. Would you please stand for the reading of the Gospel. The Gospel lesson is from the 13th chapter of John, verses one through 35. "Now, before the feast of the Passover, "when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart "out of this world to the Father, "having loved his own who were in the world "he loved them to the end. "And during supper, when the Devil had already "put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, "to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father "had given all things into his hands, "and that he had come from God and was going to God, "rose from supper, laid aside his garments, "and girded himself with a towel. "Then he poured water into a basin "and began to wash the

disciples' feet "and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. "He came to Simon Peter, and Peter said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" "Jesus answered him, 'What I am doing "'you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.' "Peter said to him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' "Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, "'you have no part in me.' "Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only "'but also my hands and my head.' "And Jesus said to him, 'He who has bathed "'does not need to wash, except for his feet. "'But he is clean all over, and you are clean. "'But not every one of you,' "for he knew who was to betray him. "That was why he said, 'You are not all clean.' "When he had washed their feet and taken his garments "and resumed his place, he said to them, "'Do you know what I have done to you? "'You call me teacher and Lord, "'and you are right, for so I am. "'If I, then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, "'you also ought to wash one another's feet. "'For I have given you an example, that you also should do "'as I have done to you. "'Truly, truly I say to you, a servant is not greater "'than his master, nor is he who is sent "'greater than he who sent him. "'If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. "'I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen. "'It is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ""He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." "'I tell you this now, before it takes place, ""that when it does take place, ""you may believe that I am he. "'Truly, truly I say to you, he who receives ""anyone whom I send receives me, and he who receives me ""receives him who sent me.' "When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit "and testified, 'Truly, truly I say to you, "'one of you will betray me.' "The disciples looked at one another, "uncertain of whom he spoke. "One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, "was lying close to the breast of Jesus, "so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "'Tell us who it is of whom he speaks.' "So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, "he said to him, 'Lord, who is it?' "Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I shall give ""this morsel when I have dipped it.' "So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, "the son of Simon Iscariot. "Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. "Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.' "Now, no one at the table knew why he said this to him. "Some thought that because Judas had the money box "Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the feast,' "or that he should give something to the poor. "So after receiving the morsel, "he immediately went out, and it was night. "When he had gone out, Jesus said, ""Now is the Son of Man glorified, ""and in him God is glorified. ""If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him ""in himself, and glorify him at once. ""Little children, yet a little while I am with you. ""You will seek me, and as I said to the Jews, ""so now I say to you: where I am going, you cannot come. ""A new commandment I give to you: ""that you love one another, even as I have loved you, ""that you also love one another. ""By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, ""if you have love for one another." Here ends the reading of the Gospel. Praise be to God. You may be seated. I greet you this night in the name of our Lord. Let us pray. Mighty God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight this night. Amen. I shall never again approach a service on Maundy Thursday without a vivid memory about an experience of two years ago. I had the privilege of traveling with 24 other United Methodists through the People's Republic of China. We were one of the very first church groups identified as such allowed into that country. We were there to learn about the country and its people in order that we could be resource persons to United Methodists in this country as they undertook a mission study of that land and its way of life. We arrived in Peking, or Beijing as we are now supposed to call it, on the Saturday before Palm Sunday. Before leaving New York, we had agreed to hold services during Holy Week, wherever we were. Palm Sunday was celebrated at noon in Peking in the Peking Hotel, in one of the spacious guest rooms. From the time we had deplaned at the airport in Peking, we had been met with billboards and notices on bulletin boards and slogans on the lips of

our Chinese guides which all said, "Serve the People!" That was a slogan which Chairman Mao Zedong had espoused and which people seemed determined at that time to follow. And it showed, in people's faces, in their appearance, in their politeness. People seemed to be well-fed, clothed, healthy, and they cared for one another. And they were certainly gracious to their guests. Granted, "people" was a euphemism for "state," but the people seemed to be the real beneficiaries. And it was easy to make the transference from people to state and back to people again. Thursday evening, Maundy Thursday, we were in Yangchow in what had once been a British guest house, now run by the Chinese government for tourists. We had requested of our Chinese hosts a room for a service, a basin of water and towels, and communion elements. Having spent five days with the slogan, "Serve the People," it seemed very fitting to us that our Maundy Thursday service be a foot-washing service, and that our text for the evening be the Gospel passage which I just read to you. By the time we returned to the guest house around 10:30 p.m. after having spent a full day which began at the Sun Yat Sen Memorial in Nanking, traveling 70 to 80 miles by a very slow bus from Nanking, visiting a commune, and attending a Chinese movie, we were all ready for hot showers and bed. But it was Maundy Thursday, and we had pledged about a hundred years before in New York that we would have a service, and our Chinese hosts had made preparations for us. So, weary travelers that we were, we gathered in the conference room at the guest house for our Maundy Thursday service, foot-washing and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Our responsible hosts had served the people, their guests, well. For there were trays of steaming hot towels and a basin of soothing warm water, and soft, soft towels to dry feet. And there was a loaf of bread, and there was a bottle of wine. And our hosts remained around the room, not accepting our invitation to join us, but watching to see what this church group, also known as the Blue Team, was up to now. Prayers were said, the Scripture was read, and we knelt there in that room in that strange land, far from home, remembering the services that would be going on in our home churches, missing our loved ones, and we washed one another's tired and dusty feet. And the meaning of that Scripture passage came alive, taught to us by a people, most of whom had never heard the passage read, did not know who Jesus was, did not know what we were up to, but who understood and recited and kept ever before them the slogan "Serve the People." Many of us had never participated in a foot-washing service before, and initially we felt strange and awkward and shy, perhaps not unlike Peter, at having our feet washed by someone else in our group. It was much easier to do the washing than to have it done; that is, until one thought about the passage that had been read. For here was Jesus, who according to this Gospel account knew his hour had come, that all of this was to be over soon for him, that the hour of glory would be his. Such knowledge might have filled him with pride, but instead he washed his disciples' feet. Knowing that he was Lord of all, that he was King of Kings, he washed feet. We probably would have had contempt for human beings and the things of this world, like dirty feet, but he assumed the office of a slave to bring comfort to those to whom he was also host. Knowing that betrayal was close at hand, we would probably have been bitter and filled with hate, but Jesus met the approaching injury and disloyalty and death with humility and love. To assume the role of washing another's feet meant for us, as we experienced it in Yangchow, assuming and committing ourselves to a life of serving the people; one another, the Chinese, the folks at home, and all those in between. As we assumed Peter's role and reflected on it, allowing our feet to be washed meant also the same commitment, for in accepting that act, we were opening ourselves to new understandings of service, to new possibilities for life, to risks and to hope. But the service did not end there. The account continued; it foretold the betrayal; Jesus offered bread to Judas and urged him to do quickly what he was going to do. And there in that room where the revolutionary committee for that guest house met, we served one another

the Lord's Supper, knowing that even as we offered and as we received, we too would be betrayers and deniers; for we would not want to serve nor would we want to have our feet washed; for we would not want to love one another nor would we want to accept the love that God offered. We heard the new commandment to love, but it was not until Easter Monday in Shanghai that an understanding of that new commandment came and that a real awareness of our responsibility was born, or that the meaning of our hope was made alive. For on that Monday we were told, after a long conference among our Chinese guides, that they all wanted to ride on our bus and not with the Red Team. The Red Team was a group of American shoppers who were traveling the same route as were we, who had been rather disparaging to some of the ethnic members of our group, and who had labeled us religious fanatics after the foot-washing service. But the Chinese guides wanted to ride on our bus because we, being a church group, were different; we cared about the Chinese people and we cared about one another. And we thanked God, that God's voice was spoken to us through a people who claimed to have no knowledge or need of a god; and that perhaps that voice had been heard echoing back through us to those who had spoken it to us. On the table here before you are a towel and a basin, symbols of love, humility and service, that remind us of the parable lived by our Lord and which parable we are called to actualize. Also to be placed on the table are bread and wine of which we will eat and drink. As we do so, let us keep in mind that by accepting them, we are committing ourselves once again to a life of love and service, to the people, in God's name. "I shall put my law within them, "and I will write it upon their hearts. "This is my body, which is for you. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. "A new commandment I give to you: "that you love one another, even as I have loved you, "that you also love one another. "By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, "if you have love for one another." Amen and amen.

- Let us pray. O Lord our God, hear us as we pray. That the world may live in peace and that the church may achieve unity, fulfilling its service here and everywhere,

- Lord, hear our prayer.

- That all ministers and teachers in the church may be faithful servants of the Gospel, leading others into its way of life and strengthening their faith,

- Lord, hear our prayer.

- That the leaders of this nation and of the world may govern with justice and with mercy,

- Lord, hear our prayer.

- That all our work may be done for the common good, that it be done in safety, and that all may be spared from grinding toil which destroys fullness of life,

- Lord, hear our prayer.

- That those who work on frontiers of truth and those who enrich our lives with beauty and joy may be free

to follow their vocations,

- Lord, hear our prayer.

- That those who suffer disease or poverty or loneliness or grief may be healed and comforted, that those who are oppressed or persecuted may be strengthened and delivered,

- Lord, hear our prayer.

- That those whom we have known and loved who have died in the faith may be a glorious memory to us and a source of renewed fellowship with all the saints,

- Lord, hear our prayer, Jesus Christ our Savior.

- Amen; stand, please. Dear friends, hear these words. Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him and all who desire to live in peace with one another. The peace of the Lord is with you always.

- And also with you.

- As forgiven and reconciled people, let us now offer ourselves and our gifts to God. Amen. Be seated, please. (organ music) ♪ This is my commandment ♪ ♪ That ye love one another ♪ ♪ Ev'n as I have loved you ♪ ♪ No man hath greater love than this ♪ ♪ To give his life ev'n for his friends ♪ ♪ No man hath greater love than this ♪ ♪ To give his life ev'n for his friends ♪ (organ music) ♪ When I survey the wondrous cross ♪ ♪ On which the Prince of glory died ♪ ♪ My richest gain I count but loss ♪ ♪ And pour contempt on all my pride ♪ ♪ Were the whole realm of nature mine ♪ ♪ That were a present far too small ♪ ♪ Love so amazing, so divine ♪ ♪ Demands my soul, my life, my all ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- Let us offer to God this prayer of dedication; let us pray. O God most merciful and gracious, of whose bounty we have all received, accept these offerings of your people. Remember in your love those who have brought it and those for whom it is given, and so follow it with your blessing, that it may promote peace and love and good will among people around the world and may advance the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ. Amen. Let us continue in prayer. The Lord is with you.

- And with you also.

- Lift up your hearts.

- We lift them up to the Lord.

- Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

- It is right to give God thanks and praise.

- O God, it is right that we should always and everywhere give you thanks and praise. We thank you, O Lord our God, that you loved the world so much that you sent your only son to be our savior. We remember that on the night in which he gave himself up for us, our Lord Jesus took bread. After giving you thanks, he broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you." When the supper was over, he took the cup. Again he returned thanks to you, gave the cup to his disciples, and said, "Drink from this, all of you. "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, "poured out for you and for many "for the forgiveness of sins." When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we experience anew the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and look forward to his coming and final victory. Help us know in the breaking of this bread the presence of Christ, who gave his body and blood for us and for all people. Make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in service to all people.

- Through Jesus Christ our Lord, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all glory and honor is yours, O Lord our God. Amen. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

- Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body, for it is one loaf of which we all partake. When we break the bread, is it not a means of sharing in the body of Christ?

- When we give thanks over the cup, is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ?

- The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, broken for you, Bob.

- Amen.

- The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ poured out for you, Bob.

- Amen. (speaking off-camera) (organ music)

- Arise, beloved, and go, and may the purity of your life be such that with true faith you may be able to know and experience the love of God, which God offers us in Christ our Lord. Amen. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Arise, dear friends, and go in peace. And may the attitude and spirit of your mind and heart commend you to God and to the kingdom of God, now and forever, through Christ our Lord. Amen. Dear friends in Christ, will you join with me now as, responsively, we offer to God this prayer of thanksgiving and commitment. Let us pray. You have given yourself to us, O Lord.

- Now we give ourselves for others.

- Your love has made us a new people.

- As a people of love, we will serve you with joy.

- Your glory has filled our hearts.

- Help us to glorify you in all things.

- Amen. (organ and choral music) Go out in peace, to serve God and your neighbor in all that you do.

- We are sent in Christ's name.

- The blessing of Almighty God, creator, redeemer, sustainer, is with you always. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen

♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (organ music)

(ambient chatter)