

Saturday 13th April



A Final Meal

As we enter the last week of Lent, towards the most challenging day in the Christian year, we remember the Sabbath crowds cheering Jesus on the way into Jerusalem. We remember those who conspired and came to a garden in the darkness to arrest Jesus. We also remember another crowd, shouting “Crucify him!” We remember those who stood around watching as Jesus was nailed to a cross, those who threw lots for his clothes, those who saw him breathe his last. In the midst of all this changing emotion, there is also a meal, a meal that is remembered often, by Christians all over the world.

On the same night he was arrested, Jesus celebrated a meal with his friends – it was the traditional Passover meal, remembering the night that the angel of death passed over the Israelites when they were slaves in Egypt. It is this meal that Jesus celebrates as his last meal with his friends, and asks us to remember him through bread and wine.

I wonder how many of you have had a last meal with friends – perhaps someone you will not see for a very long time or perhaps never see again. My last meal with friends in The Gambia was very much like that: there was reminiscing of good times, and a tangible sadness that this would be the last time we ate together.

There are many hymns which enable us to think about this last meal. Amongst them is the more traditional ‘An upper room’ by Fred Pratt Green (*Singing the Faith* 569), or perhaps a more recent favourite of mine, ‘Come, my table is a meeting place’ by Clare Stainsby (*Singing the Faith* 581). However, during the last few days of Lent, I encourage you to spend time with the hymns that speak of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday themes, as well as the praise songs for Palm Sunday (many included in the section ‘Jesus Christ the Suffering Servant’, *Singing the Faith* 262–291).

Loving God,

we thank you for friends who are with us through the good times and the bad;
we thank you for the memories we have of those we see no longer;
and we remember before you those who no longer remember themselves,
their memories held by others and by you.

As we remember that final meal that you shared with friends,
we thank you for the courage and strength you demonstrated on that last night.
Give us the strength and courage to face times that are challenging
in the coming week and throughout all our lives.

We ask this in Jesus’ name.

Amen