



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

From our Churches

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Date: Maundy Thursday 2006

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The Cloth of Jesus **Maundy Thursday - 2006**

***Setting:** Dimly lit sanctuary, large cross - front and center, communion elements on communion table, bowl and pitcher on small table beside communion table*

***People Needed:** Narrator, scripture readers, someone to place "clothes of Jesus" at appropriate times, song leader and pianist*

Narrator:

Tonight is a night of darkness,
Tonight is a night of pain and suffering
Tonight is a night for sadness and grief
Tonight is a night for prayer
Tonight is a night to remember.

We will cover a range of emotion on this evening.
As strange as it might seem, there will also be time for praise.
It is a night where sorrow and joy mingle together.
This is a night of mystery.

This is a time for quiet
This is a time for reflection
This is a time of self-examination
This is a time for confession
This is a time to sit together in the shadow of an old wooden cross.

Song - The Old Rugged Cross

Prayer:

God of comfort and God of caring, we ask that you stay especially near to all who call on your name on this night of holy remembrance. We are afraid, and we lack courage to face what lies ahead. Just as you embraced your dear son - on the night he was mocked and taunted and whipped and crucified - we ask you to embrace us now with your love, with your grace and with your forgiveness. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Narrator:

It's difficult, isn't it? Difficult to really understand what this night so many years ago was really like for our Lord and our Savior.

It's so difficult to really "get it". But we want to - we want to get it. We want to take that same walk that our Lord took. We want to understand and we want to know. And yet we want to stay far away from it all - just like I have stayed away from watching Mel Gibson's movie on the death of our Lord. There is so much about the death of Jesus that is just too unjust and too horrible. And so we tend to watch and listen and experience - from a comfortable distance. And we can do that - because after all - we are people of the resurrection - we know that in three days we'll come back to church here and the blackness will be gone, and the flowers will be everywhere and we will sing *Christ the Lord has risen today ...*

But ...

- I invite you on this night to rest here in the darkness awhile
- I invite you to face the horror and the sorrow of this dark night and not to rush to the empty tomb just yet
- It is good that you have come

Our service for this evening is entitled "The Cloth of Jesus."

Throughout the life and ministry and death of Jesus there is brief mention of garments, or hems, or bands of cloth, of a curtain, or linen, and so tonight we will read and experience Jesus' life, ministry and death by touching and holding and experiencing the "Cloth of Jesus."

Let us begin:

Before Scripture is read - place wrapped baby on small stool beside the cross

Scripture Reading: Luke 2: 1-7

Prayer:

God, you sent your son Jesus into this world - and the angels sang!! You sent your son to live with a young innocent couple who had so little to give you. They didn't even have proper baby clothes to put on you - and no newly sewn receiving blanket made by grandma. Just a few bands of cloth, lovingly wrapped around your son's tiny body to keep him warm and dry. It was a fitting start to a humble, simple life, a life uncluttered with closets full of clothes and the worry about what to wear.

Jesus' coming to earth was so quiet and humble, and if it wasn't for the angels - no one would have even known he was here.

We thank you on this Holy Night for sending your son Jesus, for coming to earth so that we can know better who you are. Thank you for loving us that much. Amen.

Song: #196 (HWB) While Shepherds watched their flocks

Narrator:

Jesus grew to be an adult and began his ministry when he was about 30 years old. He chose his disciples, and for the next 3 years of his life, went from place to place, teaching, preaching, telling stories and healing.

Jesus dressed in the same kinds of clothes that other men of his time wore - a long flowing robe which was suitable to keep the sand and the heat away from the body. The robe of Jesus - holy and sacred ...

Place robe on the arm of the cross nearest to the pulpit

Scripture Reading: Mark 5: 24-34

Monologue:

It was such a simple thing to do - just reach out and touch the bottom of Jesus' robe. What harm would it do? I never really thought it would change anything. I was just so desperate. I had been sick for so long. I didn't know what else to do. I had heard that Jesus had the power to heal people. I knew others - people who were from my home town - one man who was blind all his life, but could now see - and he said it was Jesus who had healed him.

And so when I heard Jesus was coming to our town - I knew I had to take a chance. But how could I even get close enough to talk to Jesus? There were so many people swarming around him all the time.

Oh how tired I was of being sick! I just couldn't go on like this much longer. I was getting weaker and weaker, and knew that if something didn't happen soon, I was likely going to die.

So I took the chance. I can't really be sure what made me do it. As Jesus walked by, I just reached out and touched his robe. I didn't touch him. I just touched his clothes - the hem of his robe actually. His robe was dirty, caked with sand from all the walking he did. The fabric felt rough, and yet so beautiful. Beautiful because it was worn by a man who was unlike any men I have ever known.

Immediately I felt the bleeding stop, and I felt strength within me that I haven't felt for a very long time. I stood up straight, and was, well, I was just shocked. How did that happen, I wondered?

And then he stopped. He turned around and said to all of us, "Who just touched me? I know someone here has just touched me - someone who was sick and has now been healed."

I considered just for a minute not saying anything. I was so overwhelmed by what had just happened. At first I couldn't find the words to say anything. I just stood there staring at Jesus.

When my eyes finally looked up, I could see Jesus clearly in front of me now - and he was looking right at me. He knows - I know he knows. He knows it was me that touched him, I might as well speak up.

"It was me, Master. I reached out and touched you. I just reached out and touched you, and now I am well".

What Jesus said next touched my soul in a way nothing else ever has or ever will. He called me "Daughter." Not "woman" but "daughter." It was the most loving thing I had ever heard.

"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

"Go in peace and be healed." Those are the sweetest words I have ever heard. And it all began when I touched his robe.

Prayer:

Read together - Hymn #378 (HWB)

Narrator:

A few years after this healing occurred, Jesus knew that he would soon die. Jesus knew that his death would happen in Jerusalem, and so when the time was right, he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The people who saw him coming, shouted and celebrated. "Hosanna," they cried. In their excitement they began taking off their coats and cloaks and lay them down on the street so that the little hooves of the donkey would step on them. This wasn't a strange thing to do at all - it was done for all Royalty when they rode down the street. The people recognized that Jesus was a King, and wanted to honour him by providing a clean, colourful path on which to ride. It was kind of like laying out the red carpet for someone famous and special. Lets' listen again to the story.

Before reading - Place robes and coats on the floor leading to the cross

Scripture Reading: Mark 11: 1-10

Prayer:

Most Holy God, just as the crowds in Jerusalem offered your Son Jesus their praise and their clothes - everything they had - we offer all of ourselves to you as well. Along with the crowds, we recognize that Jesus is the Son of God, the one who has come to save us. We give praise to you, for you alone are worthy of our praise. Accept our offerings of devotion and thanksgiving as we lay them before you. All that we have and all that we are, we give to you. Amen

Song: Majesty

Place the towel near the pitcher and bowl

Narrator:

Of all the pieces of cloth that Jesus touched, I wonder if the towel that he used to dry the disciples feet might be the most well known. The night that Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples, the night that he broke the bread and blessed it and gave it to the disciples to eat. The night that he blessed the cup of wine and called it the new covenant in his blood - that was the night that Jesus also bent down and washed each of his disciples feet, and then dried them with a towel.

A towel, an ordinary towel. We all have towels. They come in all colours and sizes. We use them every day to dry our hands, to dry our bodies, to wipe up spills, to dry tears. We use towels all the time. But when Jesus took the towel that night, and bent down and dried his disciples feet, like the bread and the wine that Jesus touched, that towel

became a very holy towel. It was the towel of servanthood, the towel that represented what Jesus had been trying to teach his disciples for three years. That towel was no longer an ordinary towel - nothing or nobody is every ordinary again when they have been touched by Jesus. That towel was now a blessed towel - blessed because it was used by Jesus, blessed because Jesus infused it with profound meaning, blessed because Jesus touched it. That towel, touched by Jesus, used to dry twelve pairs of freshly washed feet, the feet of those who would spread the good news to all the world. This towel - holy and blessed.

Scripture Reading: John 13: 1-20

Song - #449 (HWB) Jesus took a towel

Prayer:

Loving God, it was only a week after your Son rode into Jerusalem, and the crowds shouted "Hosanna," and hailed him as King, that your Son Jesus, did the most loving, unselfish, servant-like thing the world has ever seen. Knowing that Jesus only had a little time left on earth, he did what no king had ever done - he washed the dirty dusty feet of his confused disciples, and he encouraged them to do the same.

That simple act, said more than a thousand sermons could have said - and I think the disciples understood. Remind us again that you call all of us to take up our towels and dry the feet, the hands and the tears of a world that so desperately needs us. Make us willing servants. Amen

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53: 2-6

Narrator:

On the night day that Jesus died, he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah and all the prophets. Jesus' death had been planned since the beginning of time. God was in control, and God had a plan. All of us are sinners. Each one of us has done wrong, and has sinned. When Jesus died he took all of those sins - sins already committed and sins yet to be committed, and all of that sin that we deserve to die from, died with Christ. And because of that great act of love, we too can live, free and forgiven. It is a mystery and it is our hope.

Listen to these words written by Paul - found in Romans 5:

"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we

have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Song: Because he lives

Narrator: *(said from the communion table.)*

The best we can ever do, I believe, in our attempt to understand what Jesus did for us, is to find some way of symbolizing what Jesus did when he took our sins and carried them to the cross with him.

Tonight I want to invite you to come forward and to place one of your hands in this cocoa powder. Then wipe your hand on this towel, the towel that symbolizes servanthood. May this act of wiping clean the dirty hand, remind us of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Once your hand is clean, please go and receive the bread and the cup. Please take them back to your seats where we will pray before we eat together.

Music - Because he lives (instrumental, during communion)

Put hands in cocoa and wipe them on the cloth and then receive communion, drape cloth over the cross

Put soiled towel on the other arm of the cross

Words of institution:

The bread and the cup that you are holding are symbols - symbols of the mighty act of God in sending his son Jesus to die on the cross. We cannot hope to understand completely, but in trust we accept these gifts of bread and cup. The bread is Christ's body broken for us, the cup is the blood of Christ shed for us. We eat and drink together in remembrance of our crucified Lord, who died and rose, and freed us from sin.

Let us pray: Send your Spirit on this Bread and this Cup we pray. In thankfulness we accept your gifts to us. May we be nourished and strengthened in our obedience to you. Amen.

Let us eat and drink together with thanksgiving.

Eat and drink together

Prayer:

For your gift of bread and cup dear God, we thank you. For your promise to never leave us, we thank you. For the gift of forgiveness, we thank you. For the hope that we have in knowing that someday we will eat this meal with you in eternity, we thank you. Amen

Song #257 (HWB) - Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Scripture Reading: John 19:16 - 25

Narrator:

Jesus never owned much. He didn't have his own home. He didn't own his own donkey. The only thing he seemed to own were the clothes that he wore. Maybe that's why the soldiers' act seems so disrespectful, so disgusting, so irreverent. They just tore his clothes, the only material possession he had. Tore them and then gambled for the one piece of clothing that they had the decency not to tear. Does it get any sadder than that? I know it was only clothing, only pieces of fabric, sewn together to make a robe. But Jesus wore those clothes, lived in them, and touched them. When our loved ones die, we treat their belongings with respect. Carefully we distribute things, we store them away, we handle them lovingly and carefully. It is our final act of love and devotion to our dearly departed.

They were only clothes, but like everything else that Jesus touched, they were holy. And in dividing them up, and gambling for them, the soldiers demonstrated their lack of understanding of who this man Jesus truly was.

Song #257 (HWB): Were you there when they gambled for his clothes?

Prayer:

Forgiving God, we confess that we don't always understand who Jesus really is either. So often we do things and say things that are less than honoring to the name of Jesus. Forgive us we pray. Come to us in this hour, and draw us to yourself, cause us to have the will to do better. Amen

Scripture Reading: Mark 15:33-39

After verse 38 - Someone standing at the back of the church - tear a piece of fabric

Song #257 (HWB): Were you there when the curtain tore it two?

Scripture Reading: Mark 15:42-47

While this is read, someone unwraps the baby Jesus, takes the cloth and carries it to the tomb

Song #257 (HWB): Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

You are invited to sit and reflect quietly, or be dismissed quietly after the singing of the closing song.

Closing Song #252 (HWB): O Sacred Head now wounded