

## **Sermon – Maundy Thursday 2026**

*Scripture Texts: Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 116:1, 10-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35  
Sermon preached at Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Episcopal Church*

**Focus Statement:** *In a world that is obsessed with growth and newness and the future, we are invited to look at time differently, so that we might see the center of reality revealed in the person of Jesus and in his commandment to love one another.*

Loving God: May my spoken words be faithful to your written Word, and lead us all to better know the living WORD, Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Outline:**

1. Tyranny of the “new”
  - a. “I give you a **new** commandment, that you love one another.”
    - i. Maundy Thursday – the name of this day comes from this statement by Jesus. Maundy comes from the Latin word Mandatum, meaning commandment.
    - ii. But, how is this a new commandment? It is seen in Leviticus 19:18, Psalm 119:64, Proverbs 3:3/10:12/21:21, Matthew 22, and Luke 10.
    - iii. Moreover, mystics across history and every religious tradition have recognized the importance of love. Jesus was by no means the first!
  - b. We do have a tendency to value the new over the old
    - i. “Newer is better”
    - ii. Dynamic stability and growth, as explored in last year’s Lenten discussion series.
    - iii. Our attention is always demanded by the newest thing – where we get hooked on the “news” – but this is not generally healthy for us. Indeed, an obsession with the new tends to draw us toward a shallow, polarized, us-vs-them mentality!
  - c. The best teaching does not prioritize newness
    - i. Sure, new scholarship matters, but it takes time to recognize what of the newest scholarship will hold up to review – or what will prove to be meaningful.
    - ii. Do we really think that this is the first time Jesus has said this to his disciples? That would be terrible pedagogy. A good teacher will introduce the main point early and repeat it often!
    - iii. So, in what way is this a new commandment, and why should newness matter?
2. Maybe time isn’t linear
  - a. To answer this, I think it is helpful to interrogate our linear understanding of time.
    - i. We generally experience and think of time in a linear manner.
    - ii. Time is a line, and we exist at a point on the line called the present. More we can only move one direction on the line.
    - iii. Behind us is the past, the portion of the line that we have already crossed. Ahead of us is the future, the portion of the line we have yet to cross.
    - iv. But what if we could step off of the line?
  - b. Mathematics is helpful here, as we consider the relationship between two and three dimensional objects.
    - i. A cylinder is a three-dimensional object, like a can of soda.

- ii. But, if we were to try and capture it in 2-dimensions, perhaps by shining a light on it and casting a shadow, we could get a rectangle, a circle, or an ovoid shape, depending on the perspective.
    - iii. These are different shapes in 2-dimensions, but are united as aspects of the same object in 3-dimensions.
  - c. Similarly, God's perspective on time is not limited by being on the (time-)line, but can perceive of past, present and future as a united reality.
    - i. People of faith can sometimes catch a glimpse of this bigger reality.
    - ii. We see this particularly in the Jewish tradition of Passover, which is rooted in the command given at the end of our OT passage today.
    - iii. At a Seder, our Jewish siblings ask *How is tonight different from all other nights?* For them, Passover is an invitation to step off of the line of time, and to reconnect with that central moment of their history. Each Passover celebration is connected!
  - d. Reverberations through time
    - i. The same is true for us in Holy Week: We are closer, now, to the first Holy Week than we are to Memorial Day 2026. The things that Jesus did in those days reverberate through time, connecting us to those pivotal days and hours.
    - ii. Unfortunately, though, it is not only the good moments that reverberate through time. Cain's betrayal and murder of his brother, Abel, also reach across history, so that every betrayal and murder is connected. All hate, all wars, all prejudice are connected, and this dark reality shapes not only human history but also our hearts.
- 3. Identifying our central reality
  - a. From this perspective on time, the new is not necessarily the most important thing. Instead of always looking to what comes next, what new thing is demanding our time and attention and resources, we are able to look for the central and defining moments of our reality.
  - b. Too often, Cain's murder of Abel has been the central, defining moment of reality. The darkness (of hate and war and prejudice) has so often been the primary driver of history.
  - c. But, in Jesus, we are offered a different center. Jesus is not the first or last to give the "new commandment" to love one another – but he is, for us, the central giver of the "new commandment". His life and death and resurrection offer us a central reality that is better than the darkness of hate and war and prejudice.
  - d. And, in these days, we are invited to experience again the heart of this reality, as Jesus faces betrayal and hate and injustice and death, but *does not succumb to them*.
  - e. **"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

***Amen.***