

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Joshua H. Narcisse
Maundy Thursday, April 17, 2025

In His Hands

Luke 23:44-46

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

We've been here for quite a while now. If you've been with us for the past six weeks, you know that we've been gathered here at the foot of the Cross listening to Christ offer his final sermon before being laid in a borrowed tomb. Six weeks and six sayings that lead up to this seventh and final word that slips from between Christ's lips as he slips from life to death, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." A final word that echoes through the ages down to us this evening as we hear them pass through Jesus's lips. A final word to hold together all the other words that he has spoken along his ministry in Galilee and now Judea. A final word that is at the heart of him the Word made flesh. A final word that helps us this evening as we stand in Dark Gethsemane.

This final word. Now I must be honest, the fact that this is the final word Jesus speaks to us always used to confuse me as a child sitting through Good Friday worship, because why would you say, "It is finished." and then keep on talking? But you've got to remember, Jesus is a preacher afterall.

These words have always fascinated me as the final words Love Incarnate decides to speak. To place these words seemingly at the end of the story. To with your final breath make a

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Joshua H. Narcisse
Maundy Thursday, April 17, 2025

vow, a confession, an offering, to entrust your spirit into the hands of the Sovereign God. “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” It’s an interesting way to close a sermon.

And then I started thinking about hands.

Beloved, have you ever reflected on the number of hands that lay ahold of Jesus between the Table where he shared his Last Supper with his friends and the cross from which he hangs? Now I know you haven’t because most of you aren’t preachers for a living, but do me a favor and consider it for a moment.

The hands of Judas hugging Jesus in the garden, the hands of hundreds of soldiers as he passes through their ranks and was bound and marched to the Temple.

The hands of the members of the Sanhedrin as they tried Jesus on trumped up charges.

The hands of the crowd as they pushed and shoved and shouted “Crucify Him!”

Pilate's hands as he washes them of Jesus’s blood.

The hands of the Centurions as they cast lots for his clothes while their hands nailed him to a tree. Hands.

But still there are more hands, even after death so many hands have charge over him. As he’s unfasted from the cross and wrapped in burial cloth and laid in the tomb, still there are hands.

And yet, it’s into God’s hands that Jesus commends his spirit. Into God's hands, knowing that the Roman Empire with an assist from the religious establishment can do whatever they please with what remains after those final words slip from his lips.

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Joshua H. Narcisse
Maundy Thursday, April 17, 2025

Into God's hands knowing that on the other side of those final words waits death's hands from which no one had ever escaped. Into God's hands knowing that no matter what happened to what remained or what was to come, there's nothing like being in the hands of God.

Perhaps that's what's helpful for us as we gather on this Maundy Thursday, that through the ages comes ringing a word of comfort and calling, a word that finds us as we stand at the foot of the cross.

A word that finds us as death lingers near.

A word that finds us as we hear of mercilessness being touted as nationalistic righteousness.

A word that finds us as we see bodies being snatched from street corners and offices.

A word that finds us amidst uncertainty in economy and diplomacy.

A word that finds us facing down an immoral invitation to put our country before our humanity. A word comes to us, to remind us of whose hands our lives are in, and what our lives ought to reflect.

And I'll be honest, that doesn't sound like enough, I'll admit it. It doesn't sound like much until you reflect on hands a bit more.

It's not enough until you remember that in death and in life we belong to God and it is in God's hands that we are held, and it's God's hands that can do some impossible things.

Those hands can take a bit of earth and breath and create creation. Those hands can touch the blind and make them see. Those hands can touch the dead and make them live. Those hands can multiply little and make it plenty. Those hands can flip tables and receive children as beloved

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Joshua H. Narcisse
Maundy Thursday, April 17, 2025

ones, hands that can wash feet, and those hands can take bread and say this is my body, a body that can be blessed and broken at the same time and still be blessed.

What a word to leave with us, a final word to steady us for the days that would come when we couldn't hear a word from the Lord for ourselves. A final word of comfort to us when we have to stand before our own crosses. A final word of calling to go where Christ leads, in the sure and certain hope that even at the cross, the hands of God hold us fast.

I believe that is what Jesus knew as he hung there on Golgotha's Hill, that hands could betray and arrest and beat him, but those hands weren't the ones which formed him. Hands could strip him and crown him and nail him, but those hands didn't send him. Hand could even lay him in a tomb, but those hands would not be the one that would raise him. I believe Jesus knew that through every touch, strike, and grasp, none of them could snatch him away from the hands of God, not even death on a tree...

Beloved, what are you giving permission to snatch you out of the hands of God? What are you giving more power than it ought to have?

Perhaps that's a good question to ponder as we make our way from this Maundy Thursday meal to Good Friday's Cross on Calvary's Hill. What is that thing that's trying to convince you that your life is anywhere other than in the hands of God? Especially given what God in the flesh is willing to do for you and I and all humanity while hanging from a tree.

What a word to leave with us, a word to remember Beloved, with every breath, and it's what we ought to remember as we feast at this Table. That just as Jesus took the bread into his

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Joshua H. Narcisse
Maundy Thursday, April 17, 2025

hands, as we receive the bread into our hands, we remember that our whole lives are held in the hands of God where the promise is no one and nothing can snatch us from them.