People often ask what does Maundy mean. They understand about Palm Sunday and Good Friday and Easter but tonight is unclear.

So what does Maundy Thursday mean? Mostly, we think of it, as remembering that last supper Jesus shared with his disciples. And it is. And it’s also about Jesus showing his humility and lowering himself to wash his disciples feet.

But remember, earlier in the week, we’d seen Jesus hailed as a king by the crowds. The excitement of the disciples, their time had come at last. But oh dear how things were to change, in 5 days.

Jesus had arranged to eat the Passover meal, with his friends. But only he knows what’s going to happen.

He knows that by the end of the night, one of them will betray him to the authorities. One will deny him three times and they will all leave him alone, in his hour of greatest pain.

And yet, here he is. Breaking the bread and pouring the wine. Eating with them. Blessing them. Getting down on his knees and washing their feet, showing them his love and compassion, at a time, when we might have expected his anger.

In a world, where we’re often surrounded by messages of retaliation, or ‘an eye for an eye’ cries for justice, this is a different message. Jesus had done nothing wrong. He’d lived a life of non violence, he’d healed the sick, raised the dead and freed the captives. He’d brought hope and life to those who needed it most.

But that night he knew he wasn’t about to be thanked. He was about to be killed. Because, in the end, the goodness, and the kindness and the compassion he’d brought, were more of a threat to the Roman and Jewish authorities, of his day, than any weapon or any army. He was so radically upsetting the status quo, that they decided that their only choice was to kill him.

But this last night, he wasn’t running away. He wasn’t preparing for battle. He wasn’t plotting his revenge. Instead he was with the ones he loved most. The ones who loved him but were far from perfect. The ones who knew who he was and what he’d done and would be the witnesses to his life and his message, of God’s saving grace, after he’d gone.

And this is where the word Maundy comes in. Jesus needed to tell the people he loved most, the ones who had followed him, the ones who sometimes made big mistakes, how to move in the right direction, after he’d gone. (That goes for us too.)

The word Maundy comes from the Latin word; mandatum, which means ‘mandate’ or ‘commandment’. So when we talk about Maundy Thursday, we’re talking about the night that Jesus told his disciples exactly what he expected of them. If this was a book, you might expect the lead character to be saying ‘avenge my death’ or ‘don’t let them get away with this’ or ‘strike back’.

But this isn’t any other story, this is a story which turns everything on its head.

This is a story of what happens, when the world does its worst through violence, hatred and fear. And yet, love wins anyway. It’s the story of a love, which was rejected and buried, and yet was still too strong to stay in the ground.

Perhaps we should be calling today, ‘Love one another Thursday’.

Because that sums up the commandment or mandate Jesus gave them. Earlier, he said, ‘‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.’

This is a message we all need to hear - and remember - that this is how Jesus said people would know us. By how we love one another.

Maybe we shouldn’t be known as Christ’s disciples, by the fish stickers on our cars or by the crosses around our necks, or our regular Church attendance. Maybe we should indeed, just be known by the one thing Jesus wanted us, to be known for. By how we love.

Every time we’re able to celebrate the Eucharist, we hear the words. ‘In the same night that he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’

Very familiar words. Words, which uplift us and remind us of Christ’s enormous sacrifice, for the sins of the whole world - for our sins. However, maybe when we share bread and wine, in memory of Christ’s great love for us, the love we should have for one another is not so apparent .

So when we’re able to eat the bread and drink the wine, (virtually during this crisis), let’s feast upon Christ’s love for us and, most importantly, to share that feast of love, with others. Let’s always remember Christ’s mandate, not just today but every day. If every Christian did that, no one would ever have to ask us, who we are. They would already know, that we are followers of our risen Lord Jesus Christ, by the way we share Christ’s love.

Amen.