

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Maundy Thursday - Year A

Week 4 of Quarantine

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Exodus 12:1-5 [5-10] 11-14

Pslam 116:1-2, 23-26

I Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13: 1-17, 31b-35

04/09/2020

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

1Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper 3Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7Jesus

answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

8Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” 9Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” 10Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” 11For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.” 12After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? 13You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. 14So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” 31b“Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ 34I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also

should love one another. 35By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Service

Good evening! As I've said for the last few years, Maundy Thursday is my second favorite worship celebration. (Holy Trinity Sunday is my first.) Maundy Thursday just seems to capture everything that it means to be a Christian into one Gospel reading and one service. While Easter is a wonderful celebration, it lacks the intimacy that seems so profound in every aspect of this service. The setting is Jesus' last meal with the disciples. Unlike the other Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we aren't celebrating the Passover in this story. We don't hear the words of institution, communion isn't celebrated in the traditional sense. But what we do get is a small meal among friends, late at night, near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry.

But then he goes and does the strangest thing... Jesus washes the disciples' feet. As one commentator points out; *“Foot washing was practiced in both Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts in the ancient Mediterranean world. It had three main*

functions: 1. Personal hygiene; 2. An act of hospitality; or 3. A cultic act... Foot washing was a way of welcoming one's guest; a person's feet would become dusty during the journey, and the host offered water so that the guests could wash their feet... The foot washing was normally performed by the guests themselves, or by servants at the behest of the host... When Jesus washes his disciples' feet, then, he combines the role of servant and host."

And it's this service that for me, in the midst of our time in quarantine, becomes the focus of the text. Jesus breaks every tradition in his act of service, modeling for the disciples what it means to be a leader, to be a follower. Don't forget, this is the very last time that Jesus speaks to the disciples! This is his last chance to drill into their heads what he deems the most important... and he chooses to become a slave, to do the work of the lowest.

After the washing he leaves them with his last words. *"34I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* There it is... our mission and calling summarized in just a few words. Over the past couple weeks I have been wondering what it looks like for us to love one another in the midst of the spread of COVID-19. While telling someone that we should love one another sounds great, it can often be harder to concretely implement that mantra. But I think that part of the answer can

be found in Christ's actions as a servant. If you've ever thought being a Christian was something easy, you've got it all wrong. In the waters of our baptism we were marked as God's own, and from that point our eyes are fixated on the cross, the place where God's commitment to God's people becomes the most evident. I leave you with this quote from Gail R O'Day:

“When the faith community embodies Jesus’ love, it not only reveals his identity, but it also assumes a new identity for itself, shaped by Jesus’ identity... Jesus’ act toward us in love presents the community with a choice: One can embrace Jesus’ gift to us and embody one’s embrace of that gift through one’s own acts of love, or one can turn one’s back on Jesus’ gift of love. We can enter into community with Jesus and with one another, or we can reject that community.” So, what choice will you make? Amen.