

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Maundy Thursday - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Exodus 12:1-4[5-10]11-4

Psalm 116: 1-2, 23-26

I Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

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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.

Maundy Thursday

Good evening! It was the last full day of camp at Camp Luther in Cowan, WV. I was a counselor and helping in the high school students' age group and as part of our last day of class we found ourselves outside in a circle. The three pastors who

were our teachers approached each small group leader and washed their feet. We in turn washed the feet of each of our high school students. The setting was less than ideal. This part of WV probably qualifies as a rainforest it's so muggy. It was sunny day, and so we sat there burning and sweating in the heat. On top of it all, we're dealing with the end of a long week with a bunch of teenagers with less than questionable bathing habits. And yet... that moment of service will always stick out in my mind as a time where I felt privileged and honored to take part.

Maundy Thursday is always my favorite service of the year. Don't get me wrong, washing feet is the last thing I would prefer to be doing, but I think when taken together with the whole service it helps paint a picture of how the core of Christian behavior should look. We are shown a community full of love and kindness, even for someone like Judas. We witness humble actions of service and gratitude, and we are told that it's this ability to show love for one another that will mark us believers. We can say whatever we want, use any words we think might make us look good, but it's the love we have for each other, regardless of our differences. Now, this doesn't mean someone gets to be as cruel and hurtful as they like with no consequences. Loving someone does not mean blind obedience or excuse abuse and suffering. But it does work to hold us accountable when we don't get along.

Our text tonight from the Gospel of John is a unique one. Where the other three Gospels have Jesus sharing the Passover meal with his disciples in the upper room before his death, the Gospel of John tells a different story. Instead of enjoying the Passover together, Jesus dies on the Passover. The writer of the Gospel of John is trying to make it very clear that Jesus IS the sacrificial lamb that dies for all our sins.

Just as the Israelites slaughtered and marked their doors with the blood of the lamb in Egypt, Jesus' blood and death become a very real atonement for the world. The Gospel writer isn't worried about historical accuracy, but driving home the point, or thesis, that the Gospel began with: *"14And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth... 16From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."*¹

Grace upon grace. What a gift. While the cross is the ultimate culmination of what Jesus has been teaching and doing, his actions and lesson in the upper room in this evening's text are certainly working up to that same point. This is literally the last chance Jesus has to teach and instruct his disciples. He is boiling it down to the most important parts, and as always, those pieces turn the world upside down. *"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."*

Jesus has changed how the system works. The expectation that the teacher or leader was above such "demeaning" behavior like serving others is crushed. Jesus shows that he cares about them too much to follow conventional expectations. These are his friends. What a blessing for those disciples. God incarnate, God in the flesh, and that God chooses YOU to be friends with! Wow. But the lesson continues, Jesus

¹ John 1:14, 16 NRSV

adds another component: *“I 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.”*

This, Jesus argues, is how we model our lives. Our love for each other transcends boundaries and borders. It does not stop at political lines or ideological differences. This love is not concerned with things like race, gender, or sexual orientation. The love we are called to have doesn't care about socio economic standing, and it certainly isn't bothered by things like religions. It's a love that crosses fences and railroad tracks, it's a love that pushes us into other neighborhoods. It's a love that saved the world, and it will continue to remain a model for us at every turn. This is the love we are called to have. May it be nothing less. Amen.