

Maundy Thursday Meditation

Based on John 13:1-17, 31b-35

This evening, we are going to the Upper Room. We are joining Jesus and his disciples as they gather to share a meal. It is the night of the Passover celebration. Everyone has been anticipating this time of celebration and remembrance – when everyone gathers together to remember God’s protection and deliverance of His people from captivity in Egypt.

For the disciples, there must have been a sense of excitement and anxiety in the air as they gathered that night. The time was right, they had entered Jerusalem to the cheers of the people. Something important was about to take place. It was in the air. Judas was especially feeling the tension – he was about to force Jesus’ hand. The time had come for action.

Scripture tells us that “Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father,” (John 13:1). Jesus knows. Jesus knows that his time with the disciples is coming to an end. He doesn’t have much time left to speak into their lives and their hearts – to help them to truly understand what is about to happen. They are still thinking in terms of the Messiah who comes to set the people free from Roman rule. They are thinking in terms of revolution, power and prestige.

So it is, as they are eating, that Jesus tries once more to help them see a different way to true freedom. There is no servant available to wash their feet and none of the disciples have offered to “stoop so low” as to wash feet. So, Jesus rises from the table, takes off his outer garment, ties a towel around himself, pours water into a basin and begins

washing the disciples' feet and drying them with the towel that was tied around him.

Imagine this for a minute. . . The disciples do know by now that Jesus is the Messiah – the King of Kings, the Lord of all creation. And here Jesus is, disrobed and kneeling down at their feet, taking the role of the lowest servant and washing feet. Peter speaks out – the King of Kings will never wash his feet! And Jesus responds “. . . Unless I wash you, you have no share with me,” (John 13:8). At which time, Peter asks Jesus to wash not only his feet but his hands and head as well. Jesus acknowledges it is feet only that need to be cleaned because one who has bathed is clean but there is one among them who is not clean. Even though Jesus knew Judas was going to betray him, he still knelt before Judas and washed his feet.

When he is finished washing feet, Jesus poses a very important question to the disciples (and to us): “. . . Do you know what I have done for you?” (John 13:12) This is the question we struggle with tonight, tomorrow and Saturday of every Holy Week. **“Do you know what I have done for you?”**

The saving work of Christ is what Jesus has done and does for us always. It is not only about the cross – in includes birth and baptism, teaching and healing, the body and the blood, the basin and the towel, the life and the death.

Do we know what he has done for us? In this simple act of foot-washing, Jesus demonstrates love – the setting aside of his title of Lord and Teacher, to serve his fellowman. What do we need to set aside in order to love as Jesus loved?

Jesus ends his demonstration of love with these words: “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,” (John 13:34-35).

Let us pray:

Gracious God,

We thank you for the opportunity to reflect on the life of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We often find ourselves identifying with those early disciples. They loved Jesus, as we do, but often times they did not understand and in their lack of understanding they disappointed him and failed him . . . as do we. Yet, Jesus continued to demonstrate his love for them, in spite of their failings . . . as he continues to demonstrate his love for us in spite of ours. Jesus continued to call them and he continues to call us to follow in his footsteps . . . to continue to learn from him. Forgive us when we disappoint and fail and guide us by your Holy Spirit to follow Jesus more closely. Give us the eyes to see the world as You do . . . with eyes of compassion and love. And may others know we are Your disciples by the love we show to one another and to our fellowman. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.