

John 13:1-17, 31b-35
St Mark – April 6, 2023
Maundy Thursday
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Love

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Now 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. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then 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. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus 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." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After 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? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

"Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little 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.' 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.”

Love

This is a day of Love. A day to remember the love Jesus shared with his disciples. The love that he calls each of us to have for one another.

Jesus begins this lesson of love with feet. More to the point, he begins this lesson of love with very personal service.

Feet were dirty in the time that Jesus walked the Earth. Streets weren't paved. Sandals were all that protected them from the mud and muck that was typical. Feet were dirty in the time that Jesus walked the Earth.

Washing feet often and routinely was necessary. An unpleasant, but much needed task. Sort of like taking out the garbage is today, but far more personal. Possibly a better comparison would be to liken washing feet to washing our hair today.

It feels good to have clean hair, but washing our hair is nothing we would expect our teacher or spiritual guide. It is a very personal act of service.

It would have been a bit embarrassing for the disciples to have Jesus wash their feet and for many of us it is a bit embarrassing to observe the remembrance now. But., just maybe, that's the point.

We are called to be not just givers, but receivers of kindness. We are called to be not just givers, but receivers of service. We are called to be both givers and receivers of help in all ways. Both personal and other.

For many if not all of us, it is far easier to give than to receive. We are called to do both no matter how uncomfortable that makes us.

Tonight we remember Jesus making the point that we are to give and receive humble service; to and from one another.

Jesus tells us that our love for one another must not only be in words, but in deeds.

Jesus' love for us is beyond comprehension. Love that manifests in adoration. Adoration for we 'little children' as he refers to his disciples in this reading.

There are countless bad decisions that children make that might give the adoring parent pause, but those bad decisions don't erode his love. Just as our countless sins don't lessen the love Jesus has for each of us. They don't get in the way of his cherishing you; of his cherishing me. Our countless sins don't get in the way of him cherishing every one of us.

We are children of God. Jesus was born and lived among us and on this night so long ago he prepared himself to die for us.

Think with me now about the love Jesus has for Peter. Peter who has been with Jesus in extraordinary moments. Not the least of which was his transfiguration and tomorrow Peter will deny even knowing him out of fear.

Peter not too long before this night easily proclaimed Jesus to be "the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Peter acted so many times with great conviction, energy, devotion, and enthusiasm as he supported Jesus in his ministry.

Peter fails with every bit as much conviction and energy.

When Peter said,

"I will lay down my life for you."

I don't doubt for even a moment that Peter meant those words and believed them to be true. Jesus knew them to be true, but that would be only after his resurrection and ascension. Before any of that would happen Jesus knew that Peter would abandon him in just a few hours.

On this night when Peter said,

"I will lay down my life for you."

Jesus replied,

"Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times."

I can only imagine the terrible blow Peter felt hearing his dearest friend utter these words and I'm saddened by the grief Jesus felt knowing that his words to Peter would be true.

As Peter and Jesus exchange these words packed full of crushing emotion their last hours of freedom were upon them. Jesus knows what is to come for him and for his followers. We too know what is to come for Jesus and his followers.

In tonight's reading we see Jesus as love incarnate. We see that his thoughts and actions turn first to caring for his disciples; to teaching and preparing his disciples for what is to come. Jesus gives love and lives love. Jesus is the embodiment of love.

We see that over and over in the stories told of him in the gospels. His love is unending.

Our reading tonight ends with Jesus saying to his followers,

“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.”

I trust that the disciples lived into this commandment. That they loved one another in their faithfulness and in their failings. I trust that they loved Peter as Jesus loved Peter. Even and maybe especially through all his very human failings.

We have no trouble finding fault. Sometimes in ourselves and most certainly in others.

Jesus commands of us to look past faults, both in ourselves and in others. Jesus commands us to look past those faults and love all the children of God who embrace his promise; the promise of The Christ.

Let us always have time for one another. Let us always love one another as our Lord and Savior, Jesus The Christ, loves us and gave himself for us.

Jesus loves you.