

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2020

PRELUDE: "In Remembrance"

PASTOR: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

PASTOR: Tonight, we begin the Great Three Days of our Lord's passion, death and resurrection. We journey from the supper table to the cross. From the cross to Easter dawn. We are followers in His way, exploring His truth and encountering His life. This is the night when Christ the Lamb of God gave Himself into the hands of those who would betray Him. This is the night when Christ gathered with His disciples in the upper room. This is the night when Christ our Lord gave us His holy supper that as we break the bread and drink the cup we may here proclaim His holy sacrifice, and come at the last to His table in heaven. This is the night when Christ took a towel. He washed the disciples' feet, showing us how to honor and serve one another in love. This is the night for watching and prayer. We give ourselves freely to the demands of these great days, confident that those who die in Christ will surely live with Him.

PRAYER

Holy God, source of all love, on the night of His betrayal, Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment: To love one another as He had loved them. By Your Holy Spirit write this commandment in our hearts; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!

CONFESSION OF SINS

PASTOR: God shows great love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Let us then confess our sins in penitence and faith.

ALL: Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey You in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PASTOR: I ask all of you: is this your sincere confession?

ALL: It is.

PASTOR: Then I, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce unto all of you the grace of God, and in the stead, and by the command of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May Almighty God, who has forgiven you all your sins strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life.

MAUNDY THURSDAY LITANY

PASTOR: You knew Your hour had come. You knew Your betrayer. You knew Your enemies. But You loved unto the end. Thank You for loving us, even unto death. Teach us to love like You love. Teach us to love each other, to love even our enemies, like You loved us.

ALL: **Remind us when we forget.**

PASTOR: You took on the form of a servant, washing the feet of those whom You disciplined. You defined humility and servanthood. You are He who was surely sent from God. Thank You for serving us. Teach us to be servants without fail; to make humility our constant companion and to seek no glory for ourselves.

ALL: **Remind us when we forget.**

PASTOR: On that solemn evening, You surrounded yourself with friends and enemies, persons of faith and persons of ill-will. Help us to be able to always emulate You when we are surrounded by our friends and especially when we are surrounded by our enemies.

ALL: **Remind us when we forget.**

PASTOR: You have established a "new commandment"; help us to live it out in every moment, in every aspect of our lives, in our families, in our churches, in our communities, and throughout the world. On this Holy Night, we gather to remember again the miracle that You performed in our lives. You have brought us into Your marvelous light. At great cost to You, You have given us new life and life eternal.

ALL: **Remind us when we forget.**

THE FIRST LESSON: *Exodus 12:1-14*

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall

you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast."

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

GOSPEL READING: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not 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, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

APOSTLES' CREED (*spoken in unison*)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Go to Dark Gethsemane

**Go to dark Gethsemane,
All who feel the tempter's power;
Your Redeemer's conflict see,
Watch with Him one bitter hour;
Turn not from His griefs away;
Learn from Jesus Christ to pray.**

**Follow to the judgment hall,
View the Lord of life arraigned;
Oh the wormwood and the gall!
Oh, the pangs His soul sustained!
Shun not suffering, same, or loss;
Learn from Him to bear the cross.**

**Calvary's mournful mountain climb;
There, adoring at His feet,
Mark that miracle of time,
God's own sacrifice complete.
"It is finished" was His cry;
Learn from Jesus Christ to die.**

SERMON: "Wondrous Love"

"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."

These sentences are the reason today is called Maundy Thursday. Our word Maundy comes from the Latin word *man datum*, from which we get our word *mandate*. A *mandate* is a *command*. Jesus leaves no wiggle room in how we are called to act as His disciples. He leaves no doubt as to how we are to treat one another. Just as I have loved you, you are to love one another. There is nothing more to say. And there would be nothing more to say if we always followed what Jesus said. There would be nothing more to say if, following the example of Jesus, we spent all of our time in our church and in the world loving one another. There would be nothing

more to say if people walked into our churches on a regular basis and were blown away at how we acted toward each other. There would be nothing more to say if those who are outside the church looked at us and said, "Those Christians are not like anyone else. They are different through and through. They don't argue. They don't fight. They never gossip about one another. They only talk respectfully about one another. They never assign ulterior motives to anyone. They put the best possible spin on each other's actions. They don't point fingers and blame. They forgive and work toward common goals. Their community is unlike any other community. They are different. They truly love one another."

Those outside the church do not always say that about us. They often say the exact opposite. "I don't go to church often it is full of hypocrites. The church is just like any other organization—they fight, they argue, they want money, they want time. There's nothing different about them!"

Sam Harris, a prominent atheist writer penned these words, **"Christians have abused, oppressed, enslaved, insulted, tormented, tortured, and killed people in the name of God for centuries, on the basis of a theologically defensible reading of the Bible."**

These are all observations you probably have heard. If our governing command given by Jesus Himself is, **"Just as I have loved you, you should love one another,"** then we have failed.

And it is not really a surprise. Our hearts are not geared to love as Jesus loved.

Think back to that first Maundy Thursday. The room where Jesus and His disciples were eating the Passover meal. Look at Judas who will betray Jesus into the hands of the Jewish Sanhedrin and then Rome. Look at Peter who will deny Jesus three times. Look at James and John who will fall asleep when Jesus asked them to stay awake and pray. Look at all the other disciples who will turn and run when Jesus is arrested. Leaving Jesus to stand alone to face the coming ordeal. Look at all those faces who betrayed, denied, disobeyed, and ran.

Now pretend that you knew they would do the same to you. Put yourself in His position. They would abandon you, deny you, betray you, and disobey you. Would you still wash their feet? Knowing that their coming actions would entail all those things, would you still wash their feet? Would you still serve them? Would you still love them? Even though you know, absolutely know, that Jesus told you to love them. Would you love them? Would you be willing to die for them?

I wouldn't. I wouldn't want to love them. I wouldn't want to serve them. I wouldn't want to wash their feet. These people would be hurting us deeply. They would be dishonoring us. They would be causing us emotional pain, and our hearts would not want anything to do with them.

Country singer George Strait sings a song that applies here:

"You can't make a heart love somebody.

You can tell it what to do, but it won't listen at all.

You can't make a heart love somebody.

You can lead a heart to love, but you can't make it fall."

Why do we know that we are supposed to love one another but fail to do so? Why do we fully acknowledge that Jesus is a perfect example and yet fail to imitate Him? The answer is this: Our hearts aren't like Jesus. In reality we are much more like Peter. Jesus is putting this love one another thing into practice. He is humbling Himself. He is doing something no respectable Rabbi would ever, ever do. No rabbi would wash his disciples' feet. The reverse ALWAYS took place. Always. But in the kingdom of God, the greatest is the least, and the least is the greatest.

This reversal is too much for Peter to handle. Peter looks at Jesus and says, **"You will never wash my feet."** Peter knows this is not the way the world works. Peter knows that what Jesus is doing is contrary to everything he has ever known. Peter knows that the powerful are served by the powerless. Peter knows it was his job to wash Jesus' feet and not the other way around. Peter has a problem with grace. For grace turns the world upside down and gives honor, love, and respect when it is not earned. Grace gives love, honor, and respect when it is undeserved. Peter knew he didn't deserve what Jesus was doing. Peter knew that he had done nothing that would warrant Jesus' washing his feet, and so Peter rejected what Jesus was doing.

We are like Peter. For the most part, we have a problem with grace as well. We have a problem with Christ washing us. We have a problem with Christ dying for us. WE have a problem with Jesus saving us on His own merit—with nothing added on our part. We have a problem believing that there is nothing we have to do to be saved. We want to add qualifiers to grace. Sure, Jesus died for us, but there is still stuff we have to do for our salvation. Jesus forgave our sins, but if we don't live a holy life, we won't get to heaven.

The reason we think such things is because it gives us a sense of control. If it's all up to Jesus, then everything is out of our hands. Everything. Everything rests on Jesus and what He has already accomplished, and so we place our trust in Him. Not in ourselves. Not in our ability. Not in our accomplishments. Not in how good we were. Not in how much money we've given away. Not in how well we've treated others. It all rests on Him, and for those of us who like control, this is very, very disconcerting. We have no control over whether or not we get to heaven. It's out of our hands. And face it, we don't generally like depending on others when it comes to the most important things in our lives. We want to do things ourselves.

But Jesus' response to this is, **"Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."**

C.S. Lewis wrote, **"There are two kinds of people in the world. Those who say to God, 'Thy will be done.' and those to whom God says, 'Thy will be done.'"**

There are those people who come before God and submit to God's will. They bow at His feet and say, "God, I submit to you and what you have done, are doing, and will do.

I give my life to you and willingly serve you. Speak for your servant is listening." These are the people who understand grace and know that there is nothing God cannot ask of them.

And then there are those who God looks at and says, "You are only interested in serving yourself. You are only interested in getting the things that you want. You are only interested in preserving yourself, your wants, your desires, and I will let you pursue them. I will give you up to your desire and your selfishness. Go on your way."

You see, God loves us enough to let us go. He loves us enough to let us pursue our deepest heart's desire. Even if that leads us away from Him. Jesus tells that to Peter. If you want to do things on your own. If you don't want me to serve you and wash you, you will end up on your own. You will end up separated from me because you are acting selfishly. You are free to go on your own, but there are consequences.

Peter's response shows that he still doesn't get Jesus. He still doesn't get grace. Peter is still self-centered. Peter says, "**Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!**" If a little bit is good, a lot must be better! Give me more, and more and more!! How many stories have we heard like this?

Peter's response is like the lady who asked her husband to wash the clothes while she went to the grocery store. She came back home to find half of the house covered with soap suds. "What did you do?" she demanded. Her husband replied, "Well, I read the directions on the soap. It said one cup will get your clothes clean. But my work clothes were extremely dirty. I figured that if one cup was good for regular clothes, then ten cups would be better in getting my clothes clean." The results were actually disastrous!!

But in Peter's case, the disaster is related to his soul. You see, Peter was still under the impression that Jesus was going to be the ruler of Israel. Peter thought Jesus was going to establish an earthly kingdom & he wanted more of it. He wanted a bigger share in that kingdom. He wanted more power and prestige.

We can fall into that trap as well. Jesus, I will believe in you because I want what you can offer. I will believe in you, Jesus, because I know you can give me my deepest heart's desire. I know you can give me wealth, status, and privilege. Jesus, I know you can give me health and make all my family healthy. Jesus, I know you can give me the perfect life, and I know that if I pray enough, believe enough, give enough; if I promise to use what you give me wisely, then you will give it all to me.

Here's the point: there is a difference between those who believe in order to receive and those who believe in order to give. Peter's selfishness is shining through. It's a testament to the fact that even though a person walks with Jesus on a daily basis for years, listening to Him, eating with Him, watching Him perform miracles, and the like, one can still have a selfish heart. And that is the reason why some churches are no different than any other organization. For them it is all about receiving. That is the reason we do not follow the command to love one another as Christ loved us. Our hearts are still selfish. Simply telling us to love one another isn't going to work. "**You can lead a heart to love, but you can't make it fall!**" And so, our hearts are in need of change. Our hearts are in need of a fix so that we stop focusing on ourselves and our wants and our desires and what we can get. Our hearts need transformation. "Just as I have loved you..."

That phrase sticks out. Because Jesus washing the disciples' feet tonight is not His ultimate act of love. Jesus' ultimate act of love is an act that melts the most hardened heart. Jesus' ultimate act of love is an act of selflessness that when contemplated leads a person away from himself or herself and toward God. Jesus' ultimate act of love comes as He opens His arms on Golgotha, looks at those who are crucifying Him—looks at you and at me—and says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And then He faces the wrath of God on our behalf—faces the punishment for our sins—dies in our place so that we might have eternal life.

When you love someone and pour out yourself for them, sacrifice for them, and show them undeserved love, it melts that other person's heart. It changes them because they want to love you in return. Some of you have known such love. Some of you may still be searching for it. Look no further than the cross. Look no further than the one who pours out His life for you. Look no further than Jesus. The God who came to earth because He wants to live with you forever. Thru Him you were created. Through Him you are redeemed & made a part of the family of God. And through Him you find boldness, and strength, and a deep desire to love like He loved. And this is how His commandment to us will be fulfilled. We will begin to love one another as He loved us when we come to see what He has done for us. When we can see what He has done on the cross; when we can see His wondrous love. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PASTOR: Merciful God, on this, the night in which He was betrayed, Your Son Jesus Christ washed His disciples' feet. As we commit ourselves to following His example of love and service, teach us humility. God of grace,

ALL: hear our prayer.

PASTOR: On this night, Jesus prayed for His disciples to be one. As we grieve for the divisions in the church, unite us. God of grace,

ALL: hear our prayer.

PASTOR: On this night, Jesus prayed for those who would come to believe through the disciples' message. As we take up the mission of the Church, renew our zeal. God of grace,

ALL: hear our prayer.

PASTOR: On this night, Jesus commanded His friends to love, but He suffered rejection Himself. As we open our hearts to the rejected and the unloved, fill us with Your love. God of grace,

ALL: hear our prayer.

PASTOR: On this night, Jesus reminded His people that, if the world hated them, it had hated Him first. As we face our own fears, we pray for those who are persecuted for their faith; give us Your peace. God of grace,

ALL: hear our prayer.

PASTOR: On this night, Jesus loved His friends to the very end. As we open our hearts to all who face darkness tonight, we pray for the sick, those who mourn, those trapped by violence, addiction, or pain: give healing and hope. God of grace,

ALL: hear our prayer.

(additional prayers may be added)

PASTOR: Faithful God, these are the prayers of Your Church. We offer them trusting and hoping in You. Hear and help us, challenge and change us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (spoken in unison)

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

LUTHER'S EVENING PRAYER

I thank You, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray You that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

BENEDICTION

PASTOR: Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, keep you in His light and truth and love now and forever.

Abide with Me

**Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.**

**I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.**

**Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.**