

Welcome to Maundy Thursday. This is the service that begins the *Triduum* - an ancient word describing this single service in three parts. Each of these services - Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Saturday - form a single worship service. And tonight is its beginning.

The Passover sits at the center of our readings tonight - remembered and celebrated generations before Jesus and to this day. This is the meal the ancient Israelites shared the night before fleeing Egypt, when the angel of death “passed over” the houses whose doorposts were marked with the blood of a lamb. Our reading from Exodus describes the meal. Psalm 116 reflects what must have been the sentiment of that first passover meal (The Lord has heard my voice and listened to my cry... you have freed me from my bonds). Paul’s words to the Corinthians are a recitation of the words Jesus said at the passover meal, his last meal before being arrested. They are familiar words to us for we hear them every Sunday in our celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

Our reading from the Gospel of John takes place at this passover meal, but the Lord’s Supper is conspicuously absent from the events he describes. The meal here centers around Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. Did John see the meal as less important somehow? I don’t believe so. I do believe that this foot washing was something central to the community represented by this gospel. They likely celebrated the Lord’s Supper not unlike we do today. But this practice of washing feet, familiar to John’s people, must have clarified something about the meal.

Whether that’s true or not, I believe it clarifies something about the communion meal for us today. For, though the meal is absent in John’s account of Jesus’ last supper, some of the words are the same - these words in particular: “Do this,” and “remember me.”

That is the mandate, from which we get the word *Maundy*. This is the night Jesus gives a new commandment that you love one another. Love as we understand it today has become a noun - it's a thing, a "feeling." While love is that, a feeling is not something which you can mandate. Jesus is talking about love as a verb. Giving this new commandment to the disciples comes right on the heels of having shown them the shape this love must take. "Do this" he says, "remember me."

It's a simple action that would have been familiar to the disciples, for it was a gesture of hospitality in Jesus' time. Though it was often done by servants or slaves rather than the host, it was customary for the feet of guests, dusty from walking Palastinian roads, to be washed clean.

This act of Jesus washing the disciples' feet reverberates in the communion meal we share. Holy Communion itself echoes with the splashing water and the dripping feet. In Luther's Small Catechism we read, "With the bread and the wine, Christ gives himself entirely, that is *physically*, to us." What is Jesus doing here in John (though in a different form), but giving himself (his body) for us?

"Do this," Jesus says - "*not only eat, but do for each other what I have done for you.*" And what is that? "*Share of yourself, give of your body. Not only 'remember me,' but RE-MEMBER me - stitch me back together IN DEED, build me into the fabric of your life together, into the fabric of the world crying out for this self-giving love.* Jesus is saying, "Do this" and "remember me."

In a moment, we will be ritually enacting what Jesus does for his disciples around that meal on his last night, around this room for these disciples. If those words sound dread in your ears, you're not alone. If you're feeling nervous or unwilling to come forward and receive what Jesus is offering you tonight, that's ok. Peter is right there with you: "Can't you wash my head and my hands instead?"

If you're hesitating like Peter, I ask you: What's really holding you back?

Let me tell you, it's shame. The "dust," the blemishes, the fading pedicure, your toenails: Our feet are where shame lives in our bodies. We feel shame when our feet come into focus. But the reality is that Jesus goes right there. He says, to Peter, "unless I wash YOU" (wash this vulnerable, exposing part of you) "you won't understand what I'm doing." For Jesus seeks to attend to this most tender part, to care for this place that shows the ragged scars of the road you've traveled. He wants to honor that journey, to wash away the shame that's collected and all that no longer serves. He wants to release you from it completely, unburden your feet from what's weighing them down. In washing the feet of his disciples he seeks to free them, and free you, to love and live this way as he first lived and loved us.

He invites you to let go of shame and fear, to uncover it and let him wash it away. This is where he loves you, how he loves you, this night: By giving himself away to you, and for you. Here, he frees you from your bonds and does so with his body - in the meal and at your feet.

AMEN

Do this and remember me.

Share of yourself, your body and re-member me (stitch me back together, build me into the fabric of the world using your body)

Shows us how... at the table and at our feet

("With the bread and the wine, Christ gives himself entirely, that is physically, to us.")

If you're feeling nervous or unwilling to receive what Jesus is offering you tonight, you're not alone. Peter is right there with you.

..., I ask you: What's holding you back?

Feet - shame : dust, pain, blemishes, vulnerability : where our rubber meets the road.

Jesus goes directly there. The path we've traveled gets washed.

He loved them

Unless I wash YOU. Feet show us ourselves... scars tell our story

(Peter's reaction, People's reaction)

*"So if I... have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" Do this and remember me.

If you know these things you are blessed if you do them

I am with you only a little longer

*A new commandment - love one another (washing their feet)

(Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another)

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Paul recites the words of Jesus in our reading from 1 Corinthians. We recognize these words from the gospels - but not all the gospels. Matthew 26 and Luke 22 are where we find similar words. Paul's words, a little different from these, are those he first received from the Lord, what he handed down to the Christians in Corinth. But These words ("As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes), these are unique to Paul. We find them in neither of the other accounts.

Passover us O God - mercy and the sign of blood.

Psalm 116:16 You have loosed my bonds

New covenant

"It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine..."

God hidden in Christ on the Cross (Physical giving) | Pain