

Sermon for Maundy Thursday 2026

John 13:1-17,31b-35

Tonight, we recall the history of the Passover in which God's hand leads the Hebrew people out of the bondage of slavery through the blood of an unblemished lamb. Tonight, we recall the history of the Last Supper in which God's hand leads the disciples/you and I out of years of slavery to sin and evil through the body and blood of another spotless Lamb—the Lamb of God—Jesus the Christ!

Tonight is one Holy Night when the Sacraments—the mysteries of God's working Hands—come together in the Holy Communion/Passover and Holy Baptism/The Washing of Feet.

However, just remembering does not do justice to the events of the Passover and the washing of feet during the Last Supper—saving events—that have ongoing, present significance for us believers right now today.

The passages of Scripture assigned for Holy Thursday press beyond recollection of what happened, to re-presenting them to the searchers of Jesus Christ today. They are not elaborate instructions to simply serve as reminders of the past. They are real events that have new and fresh meaning to each and every generation, now and in the future.

That is the daunting task that lies before me this evening—to re-present the Hand of God's work and re-create the event in a new and meaning manner, so that the occurrence may become real, and you too will actually experience freedom from the slavery of sin and darkness.

We really cannot understand the significance of Jesus washing the disciples' feet unless we understand the context of when it happened. Prior to the Passover evening, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, Mary anointed Jesus' feet with an expensive perfume, the authorities set out to kill Jesus because he raised Lazarus from the dead and the Jews were now following him. It is told that Jesus gave a final exhortation to summarise what it means to be a follower of Jesus – to be a follower of God.

The stage is set now for Jesus and the disciples' to enter the upper room not just to hide out but to celebrate the Passover meal. The gospel of John does not record much about the meal itself – only the foot washing. The other gospels and Paul in today's reading can take credit for telling the story of what happens as bread is broken and wine is shared.

After the meal is celebrated Jesus does something so unexpected. He falls to the ground with a bowl of water and a towel and proceeds to wash every disciples' feet. This act was usually reserved for the servants of the house not for the revered or guests. Imagine the look on the disciples' faces as Jesus did this. The act of cleaning someone's feet including your own is not fun at the best of times. Imagine feet that have not been washed for many days. They are in sandals, kicking up dust and God knows what else. Feet are by far the dirtiest of all body parts. And yet, Jesus chooses to love them unconditionally even washing Judas' feet. Little did Judas' know that he would soon be told that he would be the one that would eat the bread signifying his betrayal.

The disciples were given the greatest commandment, "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, love one another." They had experienced Jesus' willingness to flip the social order upside down by washing their feet. He did so in great love. Now he calls all disciples to love one another. Even us.

So, God comes to live among us in the person of Jesus in way that cannot be explained and becomes that spotless unblemished Lamb.

With his blood spread on the doorposts of our hearts we can be released from the bondage of slavery to sin, pass to safety through the waters of baptism, and set out for a new life of freedom, strengthened by his body and blood.

And yet we still do not follow the commandments given from God's holy hand. We deny and flee from the pierced hands of the spotless Lamb. One would think enough is enough, but God's love is unconditional.

Folks the Hands of Jesus are holy hands. The hands of a saviour! The hands of God! The amazing thing is the work of God's hands comes not when we are at our best but when we are at our worst—always, always granting us freedom from whatever holds us in slavery and bondage.

Those nails that pierced the hands of Jesus are not only the cruel consequence of an innocent person dying at the hands of a sinful world. It is how you are saved!!!!!!!!!!

Those found with the blood of the Lamb on their hearts will not be found dead—the angel of death will pass over!

Thanks be to God for the hands of Jesus on this holy night. Amen!