



PASTOR GWEN'S MESSAGE  
MAUNDY THURSDAY  
"A PARABLE IN ACTION"  
THURSDAY APRIL 14, 2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Tonight, we have a reading from the Gospel of John. It is the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. However, this story as told by John is not portrayed as the last Supper as told by the synoptic Gospel writers. It is not the Passover meal in the upper room, but rather we are told that it is before that feast. It is the Day of Preparation for the Passover. That was the day that the Passover sacrifices begin in the temple. And in this retelling, we begin by hearing that, "Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to His Father." He foretells of His betrayal and gives the disciples a new commandment. Jesus then performs the act of foot washing.

The first year I was here at Christ the Servant in 2012, Terry Tarras, the council president at the time, and I knelt down to wash feet on Maundy Thursday. Don't worry Paul, (if he is not present, could be why he stayed home tonight!) we are not going to do that this evening. Well, it was a nice thought to want to recreate this scene where Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The only problem was, no one wanted to participate, no one wanted their feet to be washed. There is just something in our culture about feet that makes one feel uneasy about people seeing them, of course in less they have a new pedicure. Also, in Park Falls, we usually have weather just like our weather tonight, that is not conducive to wearing sandals in April. So, taking

off one's boot and socks is not a pleasant thought in the sanctuary. And then there is the thoughts of sanitation. Could we use the same water for more than one person? Do we have to use soap, or disinfect the bowl and use separate towels? Those were concerns even before Covid 19. Well, you get the idea. My attempt to recreate the symbolic foot washing was a bust. And that is OK to me.

Yet, washing the feet of the disciples does have a deep meaning to most. However, just a note, you can wash people's feet until your arms fall off and that will not bring you closer to Jesus.

But as Jesus washed the feet of this disciples, he was demonstrating unconditional love. It was a parable in action. And just in case the disciples did not get it, Jesus says in verse 14, "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." There is no misunderstanding here. Jesus wants us to do to one another, what he has just done to them. Wash feet?

Well, just in case the disciples cannot infer the meaning of Jesus here, a little further down in the reading, Jesus brings it home. Don't want to leave them stranded on third base at the end of the inning. He goes on to tell them of his new commandment, that they should love one another. He says, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." And then on to another declaration, that when we wash the feet of others, we will be known as Jesus' disciples. That will happen when we have love for one another. WOW!

In other words, if you wash the feet of anyone, but you fail to love them as well, as a pastor once said, "You might have walked them through a car wash.

Jesus was really trying to bring home his message here. There was so little time left to teach his disciples. These 12 men had to get it because Jesus would soon no longer be with them. And so, the drama of washing feet, a task of a lowly servant, was the example given by Jesus. He needed his followers, these close students to love one another. If they did not, how could they teach others how to love?

Do notice here that Jesus washed all their feet. Two feet per man and all 12 disciples. Even Judas got his feet washed. That showed his great love for each one of them. Even love for the man that would betray him in a few short days. This unconditional love of Jesus was inclusive. Not only was Judas included in

the meal, but he is also included in foot washing and in Jesus' love. Even when Judas left the meal, the disciples had no idea why and Jesus did not admonish him in front of them either. That to me is pretty extraordinary. How could Jesus love the man that would betray him?

The answer to that is beyond our comprehension, but not outside of God's ultimate ability to love everyone. Everyone is included in the kingdom of God. All people no matter what you have done or will do in the future. We are all sinners and there are thieves, liars, deceivers, and every kind of wicked people around. Yet we are all part of God's plan. And we can all have our inheritance in God's kingdom. We just need to seek Him, to believe that Jesus is God's Son who came to save us from these afflictions and sins. God will never reject us. His love is big enough for all and in His eyes, we are all equally deserving of His love.

And so, our Maundy Thursday text is not so much about foot washing, but rather about our willingness to love others, even ones that will not love us back. In chapter 15 of John verse 13, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for a friend." And that folks is what Jesus wanted to get across to these 12 disciples. There is no love greater than giving up your life for another. As we continue this service tomorrow evening, we will hear, how real this statement is as Jesus gives up his life for us. Jesus has given us an example of true love. It is one we should not ignore. So, let's pray that we will be able to allow God's love to flow through us, so His sacrifice is not in vain.

Let's pray,

Dear Jesus,

We thank you for your example of servanthood and love. Give us the compassion of all people so we too can love them as you have loved us. Be with us in this task as we know it will not always be easy to be inclusive with

our love. Put in our hearts, love that surpasses our understanding but works all to your glory. And all God's children say, "**AMEN**"