

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Maundy Thursday, Holy Thursday, a special day in our Christian year, the day of Jesus' betrayal, the day of Jesus' last meal with his disciples, the day Jesus shared the love of God with all people, the day Jesus began his final expression of God's plan to save the world.

So often we are asked about the important memories our generation holds together, collective social memories. For those of my grandparents' into my parent's generations, Black Thursday, the day the stock market crashed and changed lives in America. For my generation, the Baby Boomers, there are many... the first space launch, the day Kennedy was assassinated brought to us by the TV located in almost every living room, which also brought us the Beatles live on Ed Sullivan, and the Vietnam War. Gen X'ers, born in the early 60's through 1980, faced an amazing number of collective memories: the Challenger disaster, Jonestown mass suicide, Watergate, Three Mile Island, Operation Desert Storm, things most of us here lived through, but especially poignant to that generation. Gen Y, the Millennials, people born between 1981 and 1996, were faced with the changes brought by the internet and the digital age, which may not seem drastic until you realize that they were born into a society that is constantly changing, giving them no solid foothold for stability. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, saw, as we all did, the televised events of Sept. 11, 2001.

History has raced through our culture, the good and the bad, but it seems as though it is the bad that has the most impact on our lives. The same could be said about Maundy Thursday, the night that changed the lives of the apostles. They were close followers of Jesus, not the only ones, to be sure, but the inner 12. And it is from this band of close friends that Jesus is betrayed. But isn't that normal? A person needs to know another very well to betray them. Even still, Jesus loved every one of them.

Having recently had his feet washed by Martha Jesus knew what it felt like to share an intimate moment with a friend. He wanted his disciples to experience what that demonstration of love felt like. He became a servant and washed his disciples' feet. I can imagine how confused they must have been, not knowing what to make of their leader in the position of a servant. And how good that must have felt to have him tenderly wash away the cloying dirt. Even Judas experienced this expression of love.

Ah, Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus. Did you hear where the reading said, "the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas...to betray him?" I wonder how he felt when Jesus tenderly washed his feet, with his mind focused on what he had to do that night? I wonder what he thought when Jesus said we are to love one another, knowing he had turned to those who hated Jesus? Jesus knew what Judas had done. Jesus said, "But not all of you are clean." Judas had to have known what Jesus meant by those words. Do you think he was angry that Jesus was wasting his time sharing lovely symbolism, or do you think Judas felt guilty knowing he was going to betray Jesus with a kiss, a greeting of friendship?

Which brings us to how do we betray Jesus? What thoughts, words and actions put distance between us and Jesus? Anything that breaks the 10 commandments. Anything that we would rather spend more time doing than anything else. Anything that takes our total concentration in a negative way.

But that's not all. Jesus told us we are to love one another; by this people will know that we follow Jesus. I read an anonymous post on a clergy Facebook group to which I

belong where the person, when asked by the interviewing committee before ordination, what they had learned through serving the church was, answered, and I quote, "That the meanest, nastiest people attend church." She decided to go into the profession of a college professor and not a pastor, but I can't say that I haven't experienced some of what she is saying through the 24 years I have been a pastor. However, the majority of the people whom I've been in ministry with are caring, loving people who demonstrate the love that Jesus proclaimed we are to have for God and for one another. My point is that we betray Jesus when we treat others in a way that is far from loving. I know I have done this myself at times.

How do we feel when we realize what our actions have cost us? Hopefully regret; enough regret that we do not continue in those actions. Hopefully loved. Knowing that even though we have gone against what Jesus expects of us, his love for us extends to infinity. Our betrayal will not bring about a major collective social memory, Judas has already accomplished that. Jesus moved beyond the betrayal, far beyond it, by demonstrating an even greater act of love... giving us forgiveness of sin and eternal life by his obedience to God's will.

Between tonight and Easter Sunday, I implore you to discover where you are betraying Jesus, and feeling deep regret for these thoughts, words, and actions. Enough regret so that by Sunday you will be ready for a new beginning, as part of God's plan to save the world.
All glory be to God.