**Maundy Thursday**

**Preparation for What Lies Ahead**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

**April 17th, 2025**

**Maundy Thursday**

**John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

Good evening and welcome to all of you that are virtually or physically present and in attendance with us in church here this Thursday evening. It is a blessing to be with you all again and have this service after it has been on hiatus for so many years. Holy Week is definitely about being together as the stories unfold and we follow Jesus from death to life in these next few days. Lent is over now, and we have entered the Three Days.

So, as we look at our Readings, we come to realize that this evening can be quite a bit of a task. It honestly takes some real effort to keep up with the quick shifts between the stories. We go from the Festival of the Passover where “Israel remembered its deliverance from slavery in Egypt by celebrating” (1) to an event that also commemorated that, and continues to do so as well. That being the Last Supper, or the Lord’s Supper, where we hear the all too familiar Words of Institution as the bread and the wine are consecrated and held up as His body given for us, and His blood shed for us of the new covenant. Then, of course we are off to our Gospel Reading. Here we get the brilliant imagery of the Foot Washing, the Example Jesus had given, and the New Commandment delivered to his disciples.

So, that leaves us a lot of ground to cover in a little bit of time here. However, I am going to let my brief summary sink in a bit, and allow that to cover a good majority of those texts. I am not going to hold you captive while breaking each story down individually, and I am going to give you a little homework if you really desire to dig in a little bit more to those texts. As always, I am going to primarily focus on the Gospel Reading with weaving some pieces of things in here and there. With that being said, there really is one message that seems to stick out here more than any other in my mind. So, take a listen to what my good friend Audrey West wrote in her commentary on Working Preacher back in 2015. For “just as one prepares for an upcoming meal by washing the hands, so Jesus prepares his disciples for what lies ahead of them by washing their feet.” (7) Now, that is deep. That requires a little digging for sure. So, let me invite you to do that with me here.

Yes, we traditionally wash our hands before a meal. That has been common custom for some time now. It also is a sign of respect of ourselves and others. We do this to get the germs or dirt off our hands from anything we had been doing prior. We also do this for we do not want to get others sick, or even defile the food in any way. That hand washing also serves as a ritual cleansing in all intents and purposes, and there is plenty more to learn about that if you follow along with Jewish customs as well. More homework if you desire, go ahead and use that magic box we call our cell phones, or the computer for more info on that.

 However, what is different here is that Jesus focuses on the feet. What is more interesting is that there actually is no mention if they had even started the meal yet or not. Furthermore, there is no mention as to why their feet had not been cleaned already by the slave, or a servant. One of the many purposes and points of this action “was to recognize them as a welcome guest, to remove any barriers that might keep them from the table.” (5) Now, as you may already know, they did not have all the fancy footwear that we have come to adorn our feet with in society these days. They typically wore sandals or even wore no shoes at all. The roads were not of pavement or asphalt that are common of these days, and you were lucky if that any were even of brick at that time. So, they often walked on dirt or sand, and if it rained, they of course walked on mud. This would make their feet rather nasty. So, why not come into the house and recline with your friends for a good meal and even have some clean feet to go along with those clean hands of yours?

Alright enough about feet and how dirty they could be. That quite frankly is making me a little sick up here, and it honestly has my stomach turning a little bit. I really have never been a fan of feet, and I sure do not like the appearance of even my own. I am ever so grateful for their function and purpose. For they get me from point A to point B, and they do a lot of other things as well. However, I will not be taking any pictures of them, or posting them anywhere now or in the future. I am also going to leave the example setting to Jesus, and let this scripture serve as the basis for this. I will not be offering to wash anyone’s feet at this time, as it may honestly make the clean-up even worse, as I may actually vomit next to them. That of course is nothing personal, but again, I just am no fan of feet. So, please keep your shoes on, and just continue to keep your ears open to this message.

Alright, now that I have gotten that off my chest, let’s move on here. Why do the words that Audrey West shared in her commentary strike me so much? Why do I make it a point of quoting them and focusing on them with all of you? Well, it is precisely the meaning and purpose that lies behind what she says, “Jesus prepares his disciples for what lies ahead of them by washing their feet.” (7) We all know the story, we have heard it or read it several times over the course of our lives. We all know what lies ahead of the disciples… but they do not. Jesus cleanses their feet as an example, for He wants to show them that no one is greater than any other. Jesus wants to show them that they should be in service to one another. He wants to continue showing them that unconditional love even to the very last moment of his physical human bodily existence here on this earth. We can even take things one step further and recall a story from a few Sundays ago for, “Just as Mary prepared Jesus for his upcoming death, he now prepares his disciples for their upcoming life.” (7) He wants to prepare them for all the trials, tribulations, ventures, and even the successes that lie ahead in their new and more vast roles in ministry and life. Jesus also calls us into this very same life and ministry, and that is whether we like it or not. So, maybe next year I will explore asking some of you prior, and gauging your interest or willingness to get your feet washed during this service. Maybe next year I will commit myself to living out this very example as well. For I have had my feet washed during a service many moons ago as a child growing up in the Catholic church, and sometimes actions speak so much louder than words. However, this evening we will let the words speak, and we will prepare mentally and physically for next year. Yep, I just felt my stomach churning there again, man that is going to be some preparation for sure.

Alright, with all of that being said, with all those thoughts floating around in your head, let’s focus on one last, but yet vitally important thing here before we wrap up and move along with our service. Let’s focus on verse 34… “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (2) That is precisely where we hit that unconditional love point that I spoke of earlier. That is precisely where no matter what, good or bad, we are demanded of and ordered to love. It is not easy. For when we get hurt or wronged the very first thing that we are definitely not thinking is… let me give you a hug buddy. We are thinking way worse, and unfortunately, we have probably done way worse as well. Love is to be given in the best and worst of times. Love is to be with no restrictions or limitations. Love is to be given to the very end, even if we know that someone has wronged us or hurt us. Jesus did it. Jesus did not withhold love from Judas even though he knew the devil was going to utilize him and betray his friendship with him in the garden. Jesus did not withhold love from Peter even though he knew he was going to deny even knowing him three times during his darkest hours. Jesus does not withhold love from you and I when we are not abiding by and living out the Ten Commandments. Love truly has no restrictions and no limitations, and we need to really dig in and do our best to be like Jesus and love no matter what, no matter when, now matter who, no matter period. If He did not mean for this to be so important he would not have shown this so much. Jesus would not have made it a point to highlight even at the very last meal he would have with his disciples. We are all called to love extravagantly, unconditionally, abundantly, and more importantly…. Always!!!

**Amen.**

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year C 2025

 April 17th, 2025

 Maundy Thursday

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Maundy Thursday

 John’s story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples is regularly assigned for

 Maundy Thursday.1

 April 9, 2020

 Commentary on John 13:1-17, 31b-35

 Robert P. Hoch-Yidokodiltona

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Maundy Thursday

 John is famous for its “high Christology.”

 April 18, 2019

 Commentary on John 13:1-17, 31b-35

 Lindsey S. Jodrey

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Maundy Thursday

 “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who

 proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion,

 ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isaiah 52:7).1

 March 29, 2018

 Commentary on John 13:1-17, 31b-35

 Timothy J. Sandoval

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

 Maundy Thursday

 His hour had come…. He loved them to the end.… You do not know now … but later

 you will understand.1

 April 2, 2015

 Commentary on John 13:1-17, 31b-35

 Audrey West

**John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

The story of the last supper in John’s gospel recalls a remarkable event not mentioned elsewhere: Jesus performs the duty of a slave, washing the feet of his disciples and urging them to do the same for one other.

1 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The devil had already decided that Judas son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus. And during supper 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” 7 Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” 8 Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” 9 Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” 10 Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

  12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Very truly, I tell you, slaves are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

  31b “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32 If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33 Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ 34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”