

Sermon for April 17th, 2014

Maundy Thursday, John 13:1-17, 31-35

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

All those years ago, Jesus was with His disciples on a night **much** like tonight. They ate a meal **much** like the one we just had. Our gospel reading places us in the **upper room** where Jesus **knew** it would be the **last** time that he would be with his disciples—the ones he had **hand chosen**. **Tensions** are high. The **Romans** were after Jesus, the **Jews** were after Jesus, before the night was over one of these friends of His was going to sell him out for 30 pieces of silver, another one would deny knowing him 3 times, and the others would leave him all together. **Time** was running out.

Imagine the **unforgettable scene** at that last meal, the shadows, the stillness, the hushed voices of men **speaking, intently, carefully**. There in that **shadowy** room the disciples **turned** to Jesus, who was their light. Then the **most unusual** thing happened—Jesus **got up, took off** his outer robe, **tied** a towel around himself, and **washed** His disciples feet. All of the disciples. The **self-giving** Jesus washed the feet of each and every one of them **without** judgment or cause against one **or** another. He served them as a **slave** would serve a master. Their teacher

and Lord took it upon himself to be a **servant to all**. Jesus' **humility** was to be an example for them to live by.

As I was preparing to **write** this homily for this evening I began to wonder just what happened in the verses between verse 17 and verse 31 in our gospel reading for this evening. The reading seems to **flow together** quite nicely, I would suppose **that** is why the people who put the lectionary together gave us these verses to read, as this is the **last time** Jesus would have to teach or to be alone with his disciples—**even Judas**—before he gets handed over to be arrested.

Since curiosity got the **better** of me, I checked to see what happened **between** the time of Jesus washing of the disciples' feet and His speaking of the Son of God being glorified; as well as giving the disciples a **new** commandment to live by—*to love one another just as Jesus had loved them*.

Well, **here** it is: Jesus fulfills the writing in Ps. 41 where it says, "*Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.*", Jesus predicted his betrayal, Jesus' spirit was troubled because of this betrayal, Satan entered Judas, Jesus told Judas to do what he was going to do quickly—Judas left the group—it was night. **The darkness and evil had certainly come.**

Yet, even as the darkness had come Jesus **continued** by saying to His disciples, "*Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in*

Him.” A rather unusual statement for one who was going to be dying a **humiliating** death by hanging on a Roman cross. But in the end **God will be glorified** through it all.

Then Jesus **gave** His disciples a new commandment, “*To love one another just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*” Now there is nothing new about love itself since we are taught ‘*to love our neighbor as yourself*’ **many** times in the bible. But there is a **new element** in this commandment Jesus has given. To change ‘*neighbor*’ to ‘*one another*’ and to change ‘*as yourself*’ to ‘*as I have loved you*’. “*Love one another just as I have loved you.*” Love is hard because it is self sacrificing. It means putting the good of the other first, **even** when it hurts, **even** when it costs you everything you have.

This is Jesus’ **last opportunity** to teach His disciples before he is crucified. Imagine if you will, once again, being in this upper room with Jesus. **Listening** to His words, **not knowing** what is about to happen; yet, in a couple of days Jesus will demonstrate the **ultimate power** of the words He has just spoken. He will demonstrate **just how much** God loves the world by dying on the cross for us **all—even** those who **do not** love Him.

Jesus went to the cross to show in word and deed that God **is** love and that we, as God’s children, **are** loved. As we move forward in this **most** Holy of

Weeks God incarnate will suffer and die for us all. May we continue to **reflect upon** that truth in the next few days. **AMEN**