

Sermon for April 2nd, 2015

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.

Holy Thursday, or **Maundy** Thursday as tonight has become known, is the night in which we enter into the three sacred days. This is the time when there are theological and emotional peaks and valleys which offer us intimacy and distance along with hope and despair.

What is the meaning of this time found in the church's calendar that is called **Holy** Thursday? This is a day of **transition**. The momentum **shifts** on this day. The light darkens, the shadows lengthen, and the general ideas about the '*Lenten journey*' become **specific** items: a basin, a towel, water, bare feet, and loving one another.

Earlier this evening many of us partook of the Meal in the Upper Room as we **reflected** upon this **last** night that Jesus was with all of his disciples. On this **Holy** Thursday we meet those who were at the table of confession. **Simon Peter** joins us here. He thinks that he is too good to have his feet washed. **Judas** is here. As he exits, John tells us, '*and it was night*'. John's mention of this fact appears to be a reflection of what is in Judas' heart at that time. At the table **also** is the beloved disciple. **He** is the one who will stand tall at the foot of the cross while **all**

the others will have fled. We sit at the table with the beloved disciple knowing that the characteristic of his identity that impresses us the most is **not** the noun, *disciple*, which **does** describe him but rather it is the adjective, *beloved*.

This is the night for the church to remember callings, to recollect commitments, to make confessions, and to trust in a God who is **bigger** than our past hopes and our future mistakes. In our retelling of the story of **Holy** Thursday—an ‘*up close*’ story of disciples unprepared to live up to their own expectations—is to tell **every** human’s story.

Holy Thursday gatherings are times to name all who were welcomed at this Table; those who do not live up to expectations and **betray** friends, those who **deny and curse** before the night is through, and those who will **claim their identity**, not by behaviors, but by their belovedness. Coming with the question of, “*Is it I Lord?*” With the answer always being, “*Yes.*”

Holy Thursday calls us to a life that is a life of paradoxes. A life which is not only one of betrayal **but** a life that is also a command to love. In the **uniform** of a towel, Jesus gives a command, a **mandate**—which brings to us the word **Maundy**. Jesus commands, mandates us, to love; but **not only** to love, but to **love as He himself loves**. **How** can this be? Is love **not** a feeling? **How** can a feeling be commanded? Of course it cannot, **but** there are choices to be made—the choice of loving behaviors and Christlike actions—can be chosen. To **follow** the path

which Jesus has laid before his disciples, and **us**, on a night much like this is one which we continue to follow nearly **2,000 years** later. **Because** of the fact that Jesus laid down his life, and picked it up again for us by the **power** of God, there is **no one** beyond our ability to love because of what was done for us on the cross on **our** behalf. All thanks be to God. **AMEN**