

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Year A: Maundy Thursday: John 13: 1-7, 31b-35

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John 13:1-17, 31b-35

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 put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. 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 the table, 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 returned to the table, 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, servants 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.

31 Jesus said, "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."

Jesus said, “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

On this Maundy Thursday we hear Jesus speak of love and show his love as he washes his disciples’ feet.

Love. For such a short, simple word love is a word loaded with emotion and expectation, hope and frustration.

In the past few weeks I’ve heard many people say that this “staying at home” time is a challenging time for people who love each other and live together. I’ve heard this from lots of other people. And yes, also in my own home.

Even when we are living and spending a lot of time with the people we love, life is not perfect. Far from it right? Especially when we are living together through a pandemic.

With the help of technology those of us who live alone are staying connected with friends and family, the people we love. And some days that feels like a lot to manage as well. Phone calls and Facetime and Skype and Zoom. First you have to figure out how to talk to someone and then you realize how much you miss being with the people you love and how worried you are about family and friends that you cannot be with and hold on to.

Love is not easy for any of us whether we are together or separated from the people we love.

Now love bears many forms. It can be abstract or concrete, it might be forever or only for a fleeting moment. Sometimes we love people based on common interests and shared experiences. Sometimes we love people because we think we are supposed to or we grow to love people over time. Sometimes we are surprised by love. And sometimes we love people for no reason that we can put into words at all.

So today when we hear Jesus give his disciples, and you and I, a new commandment, “Love one another” I think we should ask ourselves, what kind of love is this? What does it mean that we are to love one another as Jesus has loved us?

It sounds simple enough. Maybe for a moment it even makes you feel good inside as you hear this commandment, “love one another.” But notice, Jesus doesn’t make this commandment very long or offer a complicated set of rules to go with it. Jesus doesn’t pass out a manual on who to love and how to love them. Instead he says, “Just as I have loved you, love one another.” We are to follow Jesus’ example of love as we go about loving one another.

It doesn’t make sense to cover love up with rules and restrictions and categories and yet we do it all the time. We attempt to define love, put restrictions on it, or hold onto it as though we might run out of it. By our thoughts, our words, and our actions we decide who deserves love and who is too difficult to love.

Well to help us understand Jesus’ commandment to the disciples and to us, Jesus not only used words, he used actions. And on his last night with his disciples Jesus acted out his love with a shocking and profound act.

Jesus took on the role of a servant. On the last night he shared with his disciples, as they gathered together to celebrate Passover, Jesus knelt before his disciples and washed their feet.

The disciples were shocked by this. And we should be too.

Now maybe you have heard this story before and you think it’s an interesting moment during Jesus’ final hours. On Maundy Thursday we remember the institution of Holy Communion as Jesus shares the bread and the wine. And we hear again the story of how he washed the disciples’ feet.

Have you ever washed someone’s feet or had your feet washed? If you have you know that it is an intimate act, to kneel before someone and wash and dry their feet. If you have bathed a baby or a loved one who needed care, you know this as well. And if you have been cared for in this way, you have experienced this yourself.

Jesus’ act of washing his disciples’ feet shows us in a beautiful and tangible way that there is no limit to his love. He shows us that to love others we must humble ourselves and serve one another. The love Jesus calls us to be a part of asks us to serve and be served.

“Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another,” Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

This is not Jesus having a sentimental moment or speaking in general terms.

Love one another as I have loved you. We are not to love one another as we think we should or as we understand love. We are to love as Jesus loves us.

Jesus teaches us, tells us, and shows us that God's love is for everyone, unconditional and eternal. God's love doesn't look like a list of rules or categories. God's love does not make distinctions, does not seek to divide or exclude. God's love invites all people to be one family, one community.

Mother Theresa once said, "If you judge people, you have no time to love them."

Jesus did not judge his disciples in this moment. Even knowing what was to come. He washed the feet of the one who would betray him, the ones who would fall asleep while he prayed through the night, and the ones who would hide away in fear.

And Jesus does not judge us as we struggle to live with one another and as we struggle to be separated from one another. Jesus instead calls us to love through his example.

God brings people into our life, people we know and people we don't, people we want to love and people who we're not sure we can love. But each day, we have an opportunity to follow Jesus' command and share God's love, a love that transcends all others.

On this Maundy Thursday of this Holy Week remember that Jesus teaches us about love. For such a short, simple word love is a word loaded with emotion and expectation, hope and frustration. So true for all of us today.

But Jesus shows us that love is more than a word, an emotion or a hope. Jesus put love into action. So keep your eyes on Jesus, learn from him, and listen to him. Jesus says to you today, you are loved forever, no matter what. Follow me, love as I have loved you, and serve as I have served you.

Amen.