



## Maundy Thursday April 9, 2020

### Introduction

*This evening our Lenten observance comes to an end, and we gather with Christians around the world to celebrate the Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection. Tonight we remember Christ's last meal with his disciples, but the central focus is his commandment that we live out the promise embodied in this meal. As Jesus washed his disciples' feet, so we are called to give and receive love in humble service to one another. We are transformed by the mercy we have received and carry it into the world.*

### Prayer of the Day

Holy God, source of all love, on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave us a new commandment, to love one another as he loves us. Write this commandment in our hearts, and give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### Psalmody: Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

*Read the complete text [here](#)*

### Gospel: 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.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

### Reflection on the Text

*Dum vivimus servimus.* Have you heard this phrase before? *Dum vivimus servimus.* This Latin phrase means, "While we live, we serve." It was my undergrad college's motto. I never thought in a million years that I would see the day when being a couch potato was a team sport, but here we are.

Hopefully you are not spending all your time indoors during our stay-at-home orders with the lovely weather we've been having. But seriously, did you ever think that staying at

home, limiting the number of places you go, would ever be how we serve one another and how we love each other during Holy Week? I didn't.

I was gearing up for a normal Holy Week where we gather more than we usually do in a normal week. This year is the complete opposite. We have been advised, wisely, that we should not gather at this time, to protect and care for each other.

This story, when Jesus washes the disciples' feet, is unique to John's gospel. If John had left this story out, like the other gospels, I think that would have been a significant loss to the Christian community. This story gives concrete answers to how we should live in the world. Jesus says, "If I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, go and do likewise, because I am your example for what you should do."

Finally, an answer from Jesus that is clear as day! How should we live? Jesus plainly says, "I command you to love one another, just as I have loved you; through service to others." By loving one another in service, everyone will know that y'all are my disciples. Loving one another is the indicator that you are a disciple of Jesus.

Does our service specifically have to be foot washing? No. My study Bible notes that to offer guests water to wash their feet after a journey in sandals on dusty roads was ordinary hospitality in that day and time. A host was not expected to wash his guests' feet for them, but a slave might be assigned this task, or disciples might wash their teacher's feet. This explains why Peter acts the way he does. Don't forget that they walked everywhere. The disciples' feet were probably caked with dirt and anything else they accidentally walked through that day. At first, Peter couldn't bear to have Jesus to do this gross slave's task.

Some of you may remember our focus passage for our Lenten worship services. It was Philippians 2:5-11. We focused during those weeks of Lent on several themes from this passage, including the reminder that Christ emptied and humbled himself.

Washing the disciples' feet was one example of how Jesus humbled himself to the status of a slave. Peter objects to his Messiah and Teacher offering to wash his feet, because this was a slave's job. When Jesus insists on washing Peter's feet, it is an invitation for Peter to enjoy the life of glory made possible by Jesus.

Glory, as revealed by Jesus, is hospitality, service, and mutual love. Jesus tells Peter that unless he allows Jesus to express this hospitality and love toward him, he will not be a part of Jesus' life. True teaching and true lordship are now seen as loving service—something new, worthy of a "new commandment," that "you also should love one another."

Though power and rank define our worldly kingdom, humility and generosity represent God's kingdom. The kingdom of God exalts those who are willing to lower themselves to aid others. This is true glory. Our God serves by example.

Jesus' actions inspire us to look beyond ourselves. How have we been washing each other's feet this Lent? We've answered the call to serve by avoiding others. It doesn't sound very Christian. But right now, it is about as Christian as it gets. Our Christian ethic, in the example of Jesus, reminds us to love others by keeping our germs to ourselves.

In the here and now, we can reflect the redemptive power of Jesus' sacrifice by washing our hands when we get home, Sanitizing our keys, doorknobs, phones, and credit cards. We have answered the call to sacrifice normal life to serve others around us. This is how we love right now.

We also lift up the jobs of nurses, lab technicians, janitorial staff, receptionists, emergency medical services and everyone else who risks their health to heal us in mind, body, or spirit, when we say "Thanks be to God for you!"

Pastor Ruth Ann found a poster by Chelsie Diane about the pandemic on Facebook that reads: *And then, the whole world walked inside and shut their doors and said, "We will stop it all. Everything. To protect our weaker ones. Our sicker ones. Our older ones." And nothing. Nothing in the history of humankind ever felt more like LOVE than this.*

I had to add my own line at the end though: Nothing in the history of humankind ever felt more like LOVE than this, except for the love of Jesus Christ! Amen.

## Hymn of the Day

## *Where Charity and Love Prevail*

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## Apostles' Creed

*We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.**

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

God of love, unite your church in its commitment to humble service. Make us your faithful disciples. Speak words of truth and grace through us. Encourage us in self-giving acts of kindness. Let us love one another as you have loved us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, tend to flocks, fields, and vineyards. Bring favorable weather for crops to grow. Guide the hands of those who cultivate, farm, and garden. Let the earth flourish so that all may eat and be satisfied. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, you give us a new commandment, to have love for one another. We give thanks for organizations that respond to disasters and for agencies that offer relief and humanitarian aid to populations in need. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, give ear to all who call upon you for any need of body or spirit (*especially*). Provide for those who do not have enough to eat, those who are unemployed or underemployed, and those who rely on the generosity of others. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, you invite us to your table of mercy. Heal all divisions between members of this assembly. Extend the hospitality of this table beyond these walls, that your love and welcome be made known to all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, glorify your servants who walked by faith in this life and who now feast with you. Inspire us by the sacrifice of those who were imprisoned, persecuted, or martyred for their faith. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Closing Hymn**

***Go to Dark Gethsemane***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

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Today's reflection was written by Vicar Natalie Cook.