

Maundy Thursday
April 18, 2019

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is Maundy Thursday. Maundy means commandment. In verse 34 of John, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment – that they love one another. Jesus says, “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

This happens shortly after Jesus has washed his disciples’ feet, where Jesus has again physically demonstrated love to his disciples. Love isn’t just a feeling, real love causes action. Love causes us to do something for those whom we love.

If we jump to 1 Corinthians 13, Paul gives us a good definition of what love is:

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

That’s a great definition, right? And we see that again and again with Jesus. He is constantly acting on our behalf. All that he does is for us, including dying on the cross. Jesus is God’s active love embodied.

So, on the night before he is to be killed, Jesus stops and washes his disciples’ feet. He takes on the task of a slave for the sake of those whom he loves, and it is more than just a refreshing action, there is a lot of symbolism in what Jesus is doing. Symbols which the disciples will not understand until after the resurrection.

As anyone who walks around in sandals knows, your feet get dirty. Even when just walking around on sidewalks in sandals, your feet get dirty. Dirt is everywhere. So, you can imagine how dirty the disciples’ feet would be. They were walking around on dirt roads after all.

Dirt, as you may recall, is what Adam was created from. Adam who lived in the Garden of Eden, ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, introduced sin into the world, and got everyone kicked out of the Garden Eden. Adam, dirt, and sin are all tied together.

And, when Adam ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge, he picked up a very heavy burden for all people. A burden that none of us can bear on our own.

That burden is a realization that we are not good enough. That we can never be good enough for God to love us. And that is evil, because it causes guilt and shame, which turns us from God.

It also goes against what God has said from the very beginning - that we are good – actually very good – definitely good enough for God. God already loves us, because God created us. We don't have to earn that love.

Evil makes us think that we are not loved by God, and that God is out to destroy us. The knowledge of evil is death. It's like wearing cement shoes which makes it impossible for us to live – to truly live.

So, on the night before he is to be crucified, Jesus washes Adam from the disciples' feet. He washes those cement shoes away. He does that so that they can go into the days to come washed clean from the sin that used to be the center of the story, a story that will soon be replaced with the gift of life, eternal life.

Jesus even washes Judas' feet – the one who is to betray him.

And so, we begin our Holy Three Days with confession and forgiveness. And with the anointing of oil, we are assured that each of us really is forgiven and that the cross is an act of love.

So, we have no guilt or shame as Jesus is killed. Jesus instead takes them from us and destroys them forever on the cross so that nothing will ever separate us from God's love.

God is faithful and God will never leave us. God loves us entirely, that's why Jesus came. Jesus is God's love in action.

Throughout the Gospel of John, water brings life. Jesus' first miracle is turning water into wine. At the well, the Samaritan woman is given living water. And, on the cross, when the soldier stabs Jesus in the side, blood and water come out of him.

Water gives life. If you turn to John 1, you will recall that Jesus, the Word of God, created life – all life. And if you turn to Genesis 1, you will see that the Word of God swept over the waters to give life. Jesus and water equals life.

Today we celebrate that through Jesus nothing separates us from God's love.

So as we wash one another's feet this evening, we will remind each other that we are beloved children of God. Through Jesus, all of our sin is removed from us and nothing can separate us from God.

In the washing of feet, we are proclaiming forgiveness. We proclaim that we are forgiven as we acknowledge that everyone else is forgiven as well.

In the foot bath, evil is destroyed as we proclaim the truth that nothing separates us from God. We are good, and we are beloved.

Blessed are the feet that bare that good news.

Thanks be to God. Amen.