

Maundy Thursday Year A; 9 April 2020

St. James' Episcopal Church, Clinton NY

Patricia Kay Jue, lay preacher

A new mandate, a new commandment— love one another: that simple, that hard.

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

What do you think of when you hear the words “Maundy Thursday”?

Do you think of the bread and wine that Jesus blessed and shared with his disciples?

“On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to his friends, and said “Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

“After supper, he took the cup of wine, gave thanks, and said: “Drink this, all of you...Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.” (BCP, 371)

Does this night make you think of Holy Communion: the bread and wine that is blessed by the priest and share among all of us?

Do you recall with fondness the Agape meal that we have on this night; the simple meal of pita bread, humus and olives, shared in the St. James' parish hall.—at table, together?

Perhaps you recall Maundy Thursday foot washings, trying to remember to wear sandals or some other easy-to-remove footwear, not quite certain about showing other people your “ugly feet”: of wanting to make certain the person doing the foot washing, dries your feet well with the towel, while, at the same time, not quite certain you wanted that person touching your feet so much... and recalling the wet slippery feeling as you made your way, barefoot, back to your seat.

Or maybe you remember the tepid water, poured over your hands, as you recited the words from Psalm 50:

"Lord, wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin"

Remembrance: the blessing of the bread and wine, the fellowship of eating together, water pour over you...reminding you of the waters of Baptism.

And this year, this night, none of that....

— Jesus —

We are at a lost, we are adrift.... our whole world, seemly overnight, has been changed. Chaos, fear, confusion.... and mourning.

I think back to the Children of Israel, of how they must have felt, sheltered in their homes as the Angel of the Lord passed through the Land of Egypt, as they heard the cries of grief as Death swallowed up those around them.

I think back to the disciples of Jesus: how they must have felt, all twelve of them, or maybe more, cramped together in the upper room, seeing their leader—their Messiah, G-d—crouched on the floor, bowed over, washing each of their feet....and not too much later, they will be standing at their Messiah's feet—feet (and hands) nailed to a cross.

Chaos, fear, confusion.... their whole world, seemly overnight, dramatically changed. And yet, out of that confusion, the Children of Israel were lead out of the Land of Egypt, that Land of Grief and Oppression. And yet, beyond that fear, forty days later the disciplines left that the upper room, to inspire entire communities, as they told of the Greatness of their Risen Lord.

Because of Love. Jesus says,

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34)

A new mandate, a new commandment—love one another: that simple, that hard. Because boiled down its bareness essence, Maundy Thursday is about being a servant, giving up of ourselves, and being an instrument of Love.

Love: love enough to continue stocking the shelves at the grocery store, even though people lean over you, breath on top of you, taking items as soon as you put them out.

Love: love enough to keep tending the sick, even though the face masks and gloves are running out.

Love: love enough to stay home, even though you're a bored to tears, and want to hang out with your friends.

Love: love enough to call your neighbour, the one you barely talk to, and who dumped all their unwanted grass clippings on your prized flower bed, the neighbour who you now call to ask if they are alright and do they need any paper products.

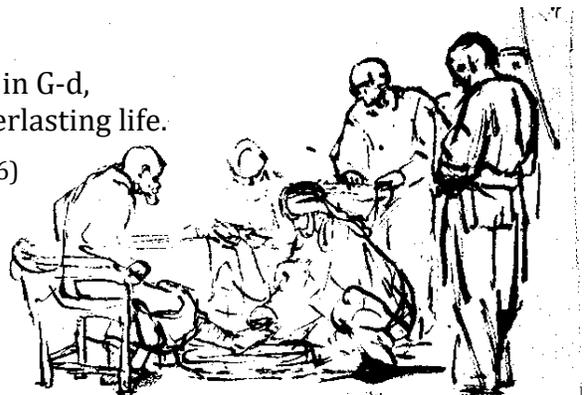
Love: love enough to find a new route and time to walk the dog, because your dog has no idea what six feet means, and so wants to say hello to all the other people and dogs that are part of your normal dog walk routine.

Love...

For G-d so loved the world, that in believing in G-d,
the world shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.

(modified John 3:16)

AMEN



Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet, Rembrandt van Rijn, c. 1640 - c. 1650
reed pen and brown ink, 157mm × w 221mm, the Rijksmuseum, The Netherlands
<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/RP-T-1889-A-2049/catalogue-entry>