

Is it finished?- Maundy Thursday
April 14, 2022

Can you feel the excitement? The disciples are all gathered together for the Passover meal. They are finally in Jerusalem, the great city. Jesus has entered as a king with palm branches waving and people cheering. Mothers were lifting their babies so they could see this great man. People were leaving their jobs to come onto the streets and cheer. The disciples would be on top of the world. This is what they have been waiting for. All those hard times have finally paid off. Jesus is finally ready to take control and show his true power. Joy and excitement would be filling the room. Sure it was Passover, a very Holy time. But the excitement was still hard to contain.

And then Jesus has to go and ruin it. Imagine, the one who would be king, stooping down and washing feet. That is not how a king behaves. There are servants for that. A king does not remove his robes, tie a towel around his waist, and kneel in the dirt. And those feet would not be pretty. They would be smelly. They would be dirty. They would have calluses from all the walking they had done. And there was Jesus, our leader, our God, kneeling down to wash the dirty, smelly feet. Peter even tries to refuse to allow Jesus to disgrace himself this way.

But then the mood changes again. As Jesus explains what he is doing, the disciples suddenly realize what is going on and Peter joyfully shouts, "Well if that is the case, then do not just wash my feet but wash all of me until I sparkle!"

With the feet clean, the dinner now begins. The Passover meal follows great tradition and Jesus begins with it. It would be a time of great joy and excitement as they gather around the table.

But again the mood changes as Jesus states that the wine they now consume is actually his blood, the blood of a new covenant. And that bread they shove in their mouths is His body, broken for us. The chatter dies down and the disciples again get contemplative and solemn. All this talk of death ruins a great meal. But as if that were not enough, Jesus tells them that one of their own is about to turn to the other side. One of their own beloved is about to hand Jesus over to be killed. Again the disciples break into noise. It seems impossible that one of their own could turn on Jesus. But this was to be. It was in the master plan from before time began. God needs to show us how great his love for us truly is. God needs us to see that even though we fail, He loves us enough to die for us.

And it does occur. All too soon, Judas brings the troops to Jesus and Jesus is taken away. And he is tried. And he is found innocent. But he is beaten, tormented and killed anyway. Just as Jesus said he would.

And He is hung on a cross. And he dies. Even the sun cannot shine on this horrible moment. The skies go dark. And those who are present feel the power of God as life is taken from the man on the cross who is God. And those who are present weep.

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Today is a very solemn day. It begins in celebration but ends in seeming tragedy. But through each step, Jesus is teaching us, even to the end. As Jesus humbles himself and washes the feet of those who serve Him, we are taught that we are called to serve others.

We are taught that even those in positions of authority are not above those they lead. Just as I am the spiritual leader to this parish, I too am reminded that I am here to serve each of you. Just as I represent the Bishop and also Christ Himself, I too must humble myself and not let the power of my position be what rules me. When I stand in front of God, I will be accountable for each and every one of you. I will need to account for how well I served God through being a minister to you.

This year, I will not wash feet with the pandemic so active. But we can imagine it and many of us can remember that humbleness that comes from bearing our feet and having them washed. I will never forget the feeling of taking each foot in my hands, feeling the callouses on some, seeing the pedicures on others. Our feet tell a story and I miss experiencing it this year. But as we contemplate it, each of us can take this occasion to be reminded that we are not here to rule but to serve.

Soon after this gentle reminder that I am your servant, I will again stand behind the altar in the position of authority granted upon me by the Bishop as we join together in Holy Communion. Here we will again remember the last supper of Jesus and his chosen ones. And also we remember all those who have taken this very same meal over all the years and who will take this Holy meal in years to come until the day when Christ returns to be among us and we no longer have to remember. Holy Communion is a joyous time of celebration.

Shortly after, our service ends in solemn silence as we strip the altar and all of the vestments of the church just as Jesus was stripped. We see a stark reminder of the darkness of the hours after Christ's death. We feel the sadness. And we leave, things unfinished, no closing benediction, no blessing for us as we depart. We leave with sadness in the air and in our souls. The heavy weight of our sins that put Christ on the cross is allowed to hang until Sunday. Although roughly 2000 years ago Christ's life on earth was finished, our service does not end until we approach the tomb on Sunday and dare to look inside.