

MAUNDY THURSDAY  
JOHN 13:1-17, 31b-35  
APRIL 13, 2017

YEAR A

Sometimes you and I struggle to understand faith. We know that it is through faith that we have our relationship with the Lord Jesus. We are taught that we can do nothing to achieve our salvation but we must trust in the grace of the Lord. We struggle to believe something that seems so foreign. We want to see God so that we come to a closer relationship but sometimes God seems so far away. We travel through the season of Lent observing the disciplines of the season. Maybe we wonder if it is worth it. We place ashes on our forehead at the beginning of the season. We may not appreciate the significance of this act but we do it anyway knowing that one day we will understand the significance. We might even wonder what people are saying about us. "Those people have dirt on their heads." We enjoyed the procession of palms last weekend and we celebrated with all those that went with Jesus into Jerusalem but then we come to the rest of Holy Week and our hearts are broken. Our hearts are broken as we contemplate Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. We want to humble ourselves and submit to the teachings of Jesus but we just do not understand why or how.

**John 13:6-8** He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

"You do not know now what I am doing but later you will understand." Jesus was with his disciples who must have been confused about what was happening. They were confused, sad and afraid at the same time. So much had happened in three years. The common people were beginning to believe in the Son of Man. They were accepting him as the Messiah from God. People outside of the Jewish faith were claiming Jesus as their Messiah and others were coming to faith because of the miracles Jesus did in their lives. They were listening to his teachings. Yet the authorities were seeking a way to kill Jesus. Why? Why would they want to kill the Son of Man? He taught the people about loving God and loving neighbor. Jesus told them about receiving living water and about the bread of life. Now, Jesus was washing

feet. The teacher, master, Rabbi and Lord was washing the feet of the students. He was washing the feet of those that were not the master or the Rabbi or the Lord. They did not understand but one day they would.

Even though Simon Peter may have been the leader of the disciples he had a difficult time submitting to the will and the ways of God. Could it be that Simon Peter had further to fall than the other disciples? Was he so sure of himself that he forgot his need for the Lord's guidance? Peter would need to become humble if he would be the rock. As much as he wanted to get it right he seems to have often misunderstood Jesus and his teachings. He is a man that had been in control all of his life yet he had no control over anything. As a fisherman he had control over when he went out to the sea and he had some control over the people working for him. Simon Peter could control the wages he paid and the hours people worked but he had no control over the weather conditions. He could not stop a storm from brewing on the Sea of Galilee and he could not control when there would be fish. He had control about where to cast his nets but could not make the fish be caught in those nets. In the end Simon Peter had little control over the amount of money he would make on any given day. Simon Peter could not even control his own tongue when he was accused of being a follower of Jesus. He denied his Master three times. Simon Peter was also a man used having a say about many things. He is a guy that had a hard time admitting he did not have all of the answers. Simon Peter had a difficult time being humble.

Today we come to Holy Thursday. This is the traditional day that we study Jesus washing his disciples' feet. We also celebrate Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper as he enjoyed this final day with his disciples. This is a day for us to submit to the power and the authority of our Lord. We must lose ourselves every day so that our Lord finds us faithful but on this day we come to the fullness of our helplessness. Jesus removed his outer garment and draped himself in a towel. The Messiah did that which was the duty of the servants. He washed their feet. Jesus humbled himself in the presence of his disciples and he made himself their servant. This act of love required the disciples to also be humble. If they were to receive what the Lord is offering they must be humble. Most of the disciples were able to humble themselves. They allowed the Lord

to wash their feet, yet Simon Peter could not do it. Part of Peter's reluctance was surely out of respect for Jesus. Jesus was the Rabbi. He was the Lord. The Lord does not stoop to wash anyone's feet. The other part of Peter's issue is one of being humble. Peter could not control what Jesus was about to do. Perhaps he was embarrassed. He was not going to let submit to anyone, not even to Jesus.

**John 13:12-17 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? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.**

If you and I are to be children of God and inheritors of salvation we must humble ourselves before the Lord. Jesus gave the example for us. He washed their feet and said they must wash one another's feet. We must allow the Lord to touch us with healing power. We must allow the Lord to guide our ways even if the way seems impractical. We do not force our own ways but we allow the Lord's ways to be the rule for our lives and the life of our congregation. It may not be the most convenient or the most comfortable for us but if it is God's way it is always the right way.

Jesus knew who he was. He knew that he had come from the Father and would return to the Father. Jesus had no identity problem and he did not worry about what others were going to say about him if he stooped to wash the feet of his disciples. Likewise, you and I must not be concerned about what others will say if you let on that you are a child of God and that you are guided by the word of the Lord. We have come to understand what it means for Jesus to wash feet. You and I are called to serve others as the Lord served us. We do any task that presents itself to us. It may not be washing feet. It may be feeding a homeless person or caring for the poor. Jesus gave you the example as he washed the feet of his disciples. Walk in his ways and in his truth and you will receive his life. AMEN