

Just As I Have Done (Maundy Thursday)

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Date: 13 April 2017

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[0 : 00] As we stand, let us pray. Father in heaven, we pray that by your Holy Spirit, you will bring us to partake in this Passover night, this night of the Last Supper.

Help us to know and to understand and to remember Jesus and his work for us, and especially that we might know your love for us, your powerful working in our lives through the Holy Spirit. In his name we pray. Amen.

Please be seated. Well, I want to welcome all of you to this Maundy Thursday service.

As we're going through Holy Week, as we're going through Jesus' journey to the cross and then to the resurrection, to his lordship, we go through his sufferings now, and we enter in with him on this night, a most important night, which is this Maundy Thursday night, because I don't know if you know it, but John devotes five chapters of his gospel to this one night that Jesus is with his disciples celebrating the Passover feast.

And that must mean that John thought it very, very important this night, this night that we're here celebrating. 25% of his gospel is here.

[1 : 27] It's very significant for him. In those chapters, 13 through 17, Jesus teaches how his disciples are going to live when he is no longer physically with them.

It's a crucial teaching, and he's going to be teaching about the Holy Spirit quite a bit. The living Holy Spirit, Jesus with them in the Holy Spirit.

He's going to teach them how to abide in him. What does it mean to love him, to live for him, to follow his commandments, and to bless the world? And then at the end of those five chapters, he prays for them, this magnificent prayer, the high priestly prayer of chapter 17.

Very, very powerful prayer. And you know that he was not only teaching his disciples that night. He was teaching you, and he was teaching me as well.

Because we, like the disciples, are serving and following Jesus now that he is not physically present. We have been given his Holy Spirit.

[2 : 37] The Holy Spirit has been poured out on us. Not only that, but at the end of this evening that we are celebrating tonight, Jesus prays for his disciples, and then he prays for those who will believe through them.

And those prayers were identical to the prayers that he prayed for the disciples. And so Jesus was teaching us that night that he was praying for us that night.

And that the teaching that we hear in this little reading from John 13 that we heard tonight is directly for us as well. And the great and marvelous, powerful truth that surrounds all of this teaching on that Thursday night is that Jesus loves his disciples.

That Jesus loves you tonight and always. And that's why he starts out in verse 1 by saying, Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of the world to the Father, having loved his own, he loved them who were in the world, he loved them to the very end.

And that word end means that he loved them utterly, completely, to the fullest extent possible. And that is how he loves you tonight.

- [4 : 06] With that love, he goes to trial tonight. And tomorrow morning, he is beaten. And he experiences physical suffering to the utmost.
- And then, he dies on a cross for our sins on Good Friday. with this love, we are going to see him teach his disciples and us how to serve.
- And what it means that he actually changes our souls, our hearts, and minds, goes very deep into our lives, the deepest part of our lives, to bring transformation to us.
- And he does that in three parts in our particular passage tonight. We're not going to have time to go into it very deeply, but Jesus washes the disciples' feet, first of all.
- And then Peter protests, you know, you're never going to wash my feet. And Jesus explains wonderfully. He tells the meaning of it all. And in doing that, he talks about how we are transformed inwardly, but also in the way that we relate to each other.
- [5 : 22] Now, many of you, well, many places in the world, you remove shoes before you arrive. And certainly here in Canada, we do that. I've noticed it's not always the case in the United States.
- It's a cultural difference. But in Jesus' time, it was custom, as you probably know, to wash feet when you came into a home, especially if there's servants in that home. And that's because feet became very dirty with dust and with animal dung, with mud.
- So it was customary for the most junior person, for the person who is considered to be the most lowly in that household to wash the guests' feet.
- Very lowly job. There was no one to take that job on this night that we are celebrating. And so Jesus does it for his disciples.
- Because he does it, it is an experience that not one of those disciples would ever forget. It was etched into their mind, into their memory forever. Because it was shocking.
- [6 : 22] It was surprising. It was not something they ever would have expected Jesus to do. And that is so that Jesus can teach them a lesson that they will never forget about what it means to abide in his love.
- And it takes place on Passover night. And we've heard how important this is in the Gospel of John in the last few weeks. because John has said Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world so that just as the lambs were killed to protect God's people from the angel of death, so also his blood, Jesus' blood shed, shelters us from the wrath of God which is against all sin, against all evil.
- To be that Lamb of God, to be that Lamb, Jesus must serve us with his love completely and utterly to the end.
- He lays down his life as a sacrifice that atones for our sins, that makes us at one with God the Father.
- That's what atone means. So tonight we are called to abide in that love, the love of Jesus for us. And I want you to look again at the details in verse 3.
- [7 : 41] Jesus, knowing that Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God, this is how he starts to wash feet, he says those words and what he's saying there is that there is no greater authority in this world than the authority that Jesus has as he goes about washing his disciples' feet.
- And he uses that immense authority that we cannot imagine in the humblest way. He rises from supper, he lays aside his outer garments, and he ties a towel around his waist.
- In other words, he dresses exactly like the humblest servant would dress. And then he goes one by one personally to each disciple, even the one who will betray him, and he washes their feet, the dirtiest part of them.

And when he comes to Peter, he tells, Peter tells Jesus, you'll never wash my feet. And Jesus answered, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me.

So Simon Peter says, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my feet. You know, do everything. It's a shallow protest that he's doing, but Jesus uses it for good.

[9 : 09] He uses it to show Peter, but also the disciples and us, two incredibly important things. And I'm just going to look at those two things briefly. First of all, it is to show us what leadership is meant to be in the kingdom of God.

If you look down at verse 15, it says, for I've given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you. That's the first thing.

And the second thing is that we would have the deepest of washings. So let's look at this leadership for a moment. We tend to look up to people with power and with wealth in our culture.

And we look down on people who serve, who are in positions that require a menial task or serving of some sort. This is the nature of our culture.

And it's no different from ancient Palestine. Jesus said back in Mark 10, he said, you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

[10 : 17] This is what it means to be great in the world. But it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

For even the Son of Man, the greatest of the great, that title says, even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

So what Jesus is doing in this action of washing feet, he is showing the reality and the sincerity of those words that he said.

And he tells us that this is the pattern of all leadership. It is the example of what it means to be great in the kingdom of God.

And this is so important for us because all of us lead. You are all leaders of some sort. You may be parents. You may be grandparents.

[11 : 20] You may be leaders in your work or leaders in school. Most importantly, you may be leading people to Christ right now in your life. And I know a number of you are.

But Jesus, by his action, has given an example for all time about how leaders serve those that they lead. It is the upside-down way of God.

It's completely contrary to the ways of the world. You know, people aspire to greatness and if they aspire to that, they want to wield power over others. And often, there is corruption that will come with this power.

We're going into a time of elections now and we understand, you know, that they are looking for places of power. And we pray for our leaders that there is not corruption that comes with the power.

The ways of the world is very contrary to the way that Jesus is teaching here. And we know this in our own lives because our sinful self gets in the way.

[12 : 23] Our ego comes to the fore. It wants to be served. Jesus says, if you want to share in my leadership, if you want to share in me completely, you need to wash one another's feet.

In other words, you need to have in your mind this scene of Jesus, your king, with all of that power and authority that's been given to him, serving you.

And with that in your mind, to serve humbly, completely, and under his authority. That is greatness. That is what it means to share in Christ.

Now the second thing that Jesus is teaching in that foot washing is he is actually a living sign. That action is a living sign of the cleansing work of the cross.

So if you look at verse 10, he says, he says about the disciples that all of you are clean. You've been cleansed. And it's an unusual word that Jesus uses here.

[13 : 28] It's the same word that John uses in one of his letters, 1 John 1, 7. He says, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us.

It cleans us from all sin. You know, John is deliberately showing how Jesus is making a connection between that cleaning of the washing of feet and a deeper, complete and utter cleansing that Jesus will do when he spills his blood on the ground on Good Friday.

That blood will cleanse us spiritually for all times. Our souls will be washed with that cleansing. This is something that many religions in the world strive for.

Many religions have cleansing that's part of their rituals because they know it's necessary to come into fellowship with God, to be close to him. But only the blood of Jesus can actually cleanse our souls, can cleanse our minds and our hearts.

Remember back in Revelation, how at the very end it said, blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.

[14 : 47] And that word washing is that sense of being cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ. And this is so important for me and for you. I have a sinful heart.

That is what it means to be human. And I must be cleansed in the sight of God. And I can be cleansed only because I trust my Savior and not myself for cleansing today, tonight on this Passover and every day to come.

It's not a popular thing for us to think of today because we think of people, a person, being at the center of everything. And God is not that important. In our culture, we don't have a sense of guilt or conscience of something that needs to be cleansed.

We probably in our culture have more guilt about not recycling than committing adultery. And that is just the way that our thinking has gone.

But the truth is that God is there in the middle of our life. He is holy and His wrath against all evil and sin is real.

[15 : 58] We are answerable for our sins. How thankful we are tonight for this foot washing because it points to the blood of Jesus Christ who cleanses us from all unrighteousness, who washes our souls.

And tonight as we go into communion, we're going to do this paragraph. It's a prayer we do every time when we have communion. It's the prayer of humble access, it's called. And in it, we say this.

We say, grant therefore a gracious Lord to eat the flesh of your dear son Jesus Christ and drink His blood that our sinful bodies may be made clean by your body and our souls washed through His most precious blood that we may forever dwell in Him and He in us.

Amen. You see what the cleansing does is at the heart of what the gospel does for us. It allows us to abide in Him now and forever.

forever. And that's where our serving starts. It starts in the perfect love of Jesus. He loves us to the end so that He goes to the cross tomorrow even though He dreads it, even though it is something that fills Him with complete horror.

[17 : 17] He goes through with it because He loves us and He cleans us through it so that our love actually arises out of His love for us first.

It's a love to the end to the full extent that drives out fear. Fears that we may have. Fears of taking risks to live for Him, to serve Him in costly ways, in humble ways.

It gives us confidence and Jesus' own authority to serve in those ways, to take that risk of love. So this Maundy Thursday, remember, you are washed.

You are cleansed. Your souls are clean forever so that we can love God as we serve one another humbly in the washing of one another's feet.

Amen.