

## **Maundy Thursday Aril 14, 2022**

### **John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

For those of you who heard my sermon from a few weeks ago, remember tonight the story of Mary pouring out the expensive ointment of nard on Jesus' feet and wiping them with her hair. Keep in mind this extravagant, outpouring of love towards her teacher and beloved friend. The linguistic tie between that act of service to Jesus and this one Jesus will now perform.

While the fragrance of the oil filled the house when Mary broke open the ointment of nard- covering those who were there. A scent that lingered in that space and on their skin. Like woodsmoke from a fire. Here it is the effect of the act that Jesus has performed that sticks to the disciples.

“Do you know what I have done to you?”, Jesus asks.

How puzzled the disciples must be. Yeah, we know, you've washed our feet. The washing of feet was a common thing in those days. Sandals were worn, roads were dusty, feet abused and dirty. To provide water for guests to wash their feet was just part of being a good host. If done by someone else this act would have been performed by a slave. It was a Mike Rowe dirty job, after all, but it was normal. What does Jesus mean, “Do you know what I have done to you?”

You can almost hear Jesus saying, from this moment on, you can never be the same way again, comfortable in being served by others. In separating slave from free, Jew from Greek, righteous from the Romans. I have

ruined you for the way the world works. Pitting one against another, us better than them. You can never again think in the same way that you have.

No, when you think yourself too high to do the scut work you will remember me, your teacher, down here washing your feet. When you think you are too important to take the time to serve the lowest in your midst, you will remember what your Lord did for you. This example will live in your mind's eye and pull you to follow me greater than anything I could have said. But just so you don't forget, I'll speak. Just so you don't think it was some dream, I'll give you a command, "Love one another, In the same way that I have loved you (even washing your stinky, ugly feet, yes- even the feet of the one you know for certain will betray you- to a horrible death) in this same way- love one another." Jesus continues, this is how folks will know you are my followers, because you love one another like this. This is the visible badge that will cause people to go, "Oh! That's one of those Jesus folks." Note- the implication is- if you don't love one another in this fashion, you ain't my followers. You're chasing after something or someone else. This way of loving others- without limit or discrimination- is definitive.

Do you know what I have done to you?

Jesus calls us, his disciples, those who follow after him, to do real things, concrete things. To embrace others. To love others. To wash others. To heal others. To feed others. To listen to others. Verbs. Action words.

It isn't just about knowing this- Oh I get it, believe me I do. Accepting in our minds that this is something that is good and right. Like eating less and exercising more. Yep, good stuff, indeed.

Jesus reminds us that the blessing comes in the doing of it. You may know eating less and exercising more are healthier for you, but it only makes you healthier when you actually do it. Note what comes in the doing isn't the saving, the claiming, (that action is God's alone and comes without our doing at all), but the blessing to us- the benefit to us- comes in the doing. The action. The blessing to us comes as we embrace each other- even those who wish us harm. As we love each other- even those who irritate us. As we wash the feet of one another. As we heal, feed, and listen to one another.

The blessing is in the doing. As we get down into the muck and see the ugliest, smelliest, dirtiest part of people's lives and recognize there something of our own smelliness. As we learn something about their story. How they once had it all and then tragedy hit. How the pandemic robbed them of their health, or their income. How the derecho tumbled the very walls of their existence down around them. As you learn about them and realize, they are just like you. Flawed, human. And you see how even this little act you perform is a sign of hope and comfort to them. A visible sign they are not alone and tomorrow can get better. And what a blessing that is to you. To see that connection. To learn their story. To know that you have been part of making their day, their life just a bit better.

The blessing is in the doing. In how these actions affect us. It is the same with praying. God does not need our prayer, but we do. Those of us who have attended to our prayer life these past almost 40 days in our Lenten Discipline know that as we have been attentive to this discipline, we are different people now than we were 40 days ago. We have been blessed, shaped, by this experience in ways that I'm sure people could name.

The blessing comes in the doing- in the acts of love we perform for others because that is what Jesus would have done. Mary anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair. What did that mean to her? How did that act of prodigal generosity change her? How did it reflect a change that had already been made in her?

It was a visible sign of the importance of who Jesus was to her. That he came before stuff. That he and her relationship with him was more important than something worth a year's wages. What love she had for him, how important he was to her and her life.

What will doing these acts of love mean to us? How will they bless us?

"Do you know what I have done to you?", Jesus asks.

Do you know what I have done to you... what I have worked in you... as I bathed you in the waters of baptism that made you mine at the font. Do you know what I have done to you in the anointing with oil that sealed you to my Father and me. In the love for you that I will demonstrate as I hang on the cross- going to death and beyond, for you. In the ways I come to you, even now, as you are here at my table, and wash your feet- those dirty parts of yourself- inside and out- the parts that you don't let anyone see, maybe not even yourself, because you are ashamed of it. In how I forgive you, o my child, and love you without end.

"Do you know what I have done to you?" Jesus asks. You can almost see the knowing smile; I have spoiled you for anything else. You can try and go back to the old way, but there will always be a yearning in you for something else. An empty spot that nothing this world has can fill. A tug, that pulls you to love me. That pulls you towards love of neighbor.

So, Jesus says. Love me. Love me by loving each other in the same way I have loved you. Without regard for whether they deserve it or not. With persistence and wild extravagance. Not just in word but in deed, and in truth.

And in these acts of love, you will re-member me. Literally embody me for your neighbors and also for yourself. A means of speaking me into the midst of this broken world God so loves. A world my Abba desires not to condemn, but to save from itself.

Do you know what I have done for you? Jesus asks. Spilled my blood, red as this wine. Given my body, real as this bread. So that you may have true life- not this self-serving mess that humans dream up- but life fuller and more abundant. Filled with loving service for one another. Life age long in the Kingdom of God.

So come this evening and experience the servant love of our God in His Son Jesus. Taste the wine of His blood, freely shed for you- so that you might live. Eat the bread that is his body, freely given for you – so that you might live. Taste and see the fullness of God's love for you and be ruined for anything else. Then look into the eyes of Jesus, our Savior and servant and hear his question to you.

Do you know what I have done to you?