

## Maundy Thursday

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The disciples didn't know exactly what to expect that night. It had been a tense week. Oh Sunday was great with the parade and all. It was fun to watch the children waving their palm branches and shouting "hosanna." The children didn't really know what it was all about but they were having a good time. Jesus seemed to especially enjoy the children but then he always had a special place in his heart for little children.

Jesus was a little tense during the parade. But the disciples loved it. It felt good to them to see Jesus getting the accolades he deserved. They too enjoyed the accolades by association - after all they were Jesus right hand men, the chosen 12.

All week Jesus' mood seemed to darken, but that's understandable. Jesus knew what Friday was going to bring and he didn't want to suffer and die that way. Even knowing that "He had come from God and was returning to God" he didn't want to go through the suffering and death of Good Friday.

But he went through with it, of course. He went through with it because it was God's will, which means it was his will too. He went through with it because he loves us that much; because he loves everyone that much.

Friday was heavy on his mind Thursday night when he met with his disciples for their Last Supper together. The disciples didn't have clue that it would be their Last Supper together; they didn't have a clue as to what Friday held; they didn't even have a clue as to what was going on when they sat down to eat, except perhaps Judas Iscariot. Judas had already collected his betrayer's price of thirty pieces of silver. Judas knew that he would betray Jesus and that Jesus would be arrested that very night.

Before the meal Jesus said to them, "I have longed to eat this meal with you one last time before I suffer." They still didn't seem to understand. Their minds seemed to have been elsewhere. Maybe they were in denial. Jesus had spoken a great deal about his suffering and dying during that week. Maybe they just couldn't process the idea. Maybe they couldn't think about it; or maybe they just didn't want to hear it.

Some of them still had hopes Jesus would make a play for power; defeat Rome; establish the kingdom of God on earth. That would put them in positions of power. James and John had asked a number of times to hold important positions when Jesus came into his kingdom. I have always suspected that Peter had some aspirations toward leadership; he was bold and seemed like a natural leader. Thomas and Philip knew they were bright and could make their cases for leadership positions in Jesus' administration. Judas was a good money man but of course by the time they gathered for the meal Judas was ready to take his money and run. I suspect Andrew, Thaddeus, and the others all expected to be in positions of leadership when Jesus established his rule. There would be plenty of room at the top. They had been with Jesus for three years. They knew Jesus had been preparing them for positions of leadership all along.

Their assumptions weren't all that far off. Jesus really had been grooming them for leadership roles in his kingdom. But their understanding of what leadership in his kingdom would mean was way off. They were still thinking of leaders as people in positions of power and prestige but for Jesus leadership meant servant hood. He had tried to teach them that all along but that is a hard concept for anyone to understand. Most people think leaders should be out front; take charge kind of guys. And that is true but Jesus was calling to them lead in service, in loving, and helping, and caring for others. They were being called to be leaders of

the kind that Jesus was. There would be no wealth in it; no power in it; no prestige in it; no life of ease; there wasn't even much security in it in this world.

Oh there would be some rewards in it; some people would appreciate their kindness and compassion; some people would even thank them and love them for what they were doing; there would be the satisfaction in knowing they were doing the right thing; there would be the peace of knowing that they were doing what Jesus would do. But those rewards aren't immediate if they ever come and Jesus wasn't promising them rewards; he was calling them to be servant leaders. I don't think they understood what that would mean for them that night. I don't think Jesus thought they understood.

So after they were all seated Jesus got up from the table; assumed the role of a servant and went from one disciple to the next washing their feet; he even washed the feet of Judas who would betray him. They were all uncomfortable seeing Jesus assume such a role. Peter objected when Jesus started to wash his feet but Jesus insisted. Jesus seemed desperate to make his point that night.

After he finished washing the feet of each one of them Jesus returned to his place at the table and said, "Do you understand what I have done for you?" No one answered. Jesus continued, "You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I then, the Lord and Master have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done."

When he said those words, "I have given you an example, so that you may copy what I have done." He wasn't just talking about washing feet. He was talking about every act of service, love and compassion they had seen him perform up to that moment and what they would see him suffer for humanity the next day. He was talking about the way he lived and the way he would die. He was talking about accepting and loving and forgiving and caring for everyone even the poor and outcasts, some people would say especially the poor and outcast. He was talking about following the ways of God even when those ways lead to the cross. He was talking about loving neighbors even when those neighbors were nailing you to the cross. I'm not sure his disciples understood that night but eventually did understand and became servant leaders.

Jessi and I need to remember that, all ministers do, all churches do, and all Christians need to remember that. We are called to lives of service, compassion, humility, forgiveness and grace. We are called to follow the example of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples and who out of love for humanity died for the world even when the world we were crucifying him.

That is what this night is about. That's what this table is about. That is what we are to be about.

All glory to God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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