

# Sermon for Maundy Thursday

**Date:** April 18, 2019

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Exodus 12:1-14

**Epistle Reading:** 1 Corinthians 11:23-28

**Gospel Reading:** John 13:1-15,34

**Sermon Text:** John 13:1-15,34

**Sermon Title:** The Disciples: Leader servants



## Hymns:

LSB 440 – Jesus I Will Ponder Now (v. 1-3,6)  
Remember Me (*Tune 878*)

LSB 915 – Today Your Mercy Calls Us (v. 1,4)  
Christ Entered Once into the Holy Place (*Tune 878*)

LSB 611 – Chief of Sinners Though I Be

LSB 621 – Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

## Distribution:

LSB 637 – Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord

LSB 618 – I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table

## Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special



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## **Text: John 13:1-15,34**

Before the Passover festival Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go back to the Father. Jesus loved his own who were in the world and he loved them to the end.

While supper was taking place the devil had already put the idea of betraying Jesus into the mind of Judas son of Simon from Iscariot.

Jesus, knowing the Father had put everything in Jesus' control and that he had come from God and was going back to God, got up from the table removed his outer clothes took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel that he had tied around his waist.

When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter asked him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered Peter, "You do not know now what I'm doing now, but you will understand later."

Peter told Jesus, "You will never wash my feet."

Jesus replied to Peter, "If I do not wash you you do not belong to me."

Simon Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, then don't wash only my feet. Wash my hands and my head too!"

Jesus told Peter, "People who have washed are completely clean. They need to have only their feet washed. All of you, except one, are clean." (Jesus knew who was going to betray him. That is why he said, "All of you, except one, are clean.")

After Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer clothes, he took his place at the table again. Then he asked his disciples, "Do you understand what I've done for you? You call me teacher and Lord and you're right because that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example that you also should do, just as I have done to you.

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

During this Lenten season we have looked at several people. We looked at Judas the betrayer, Caiaphas the schemer, Nicodemus the silent believer, Pontius Pilate the thinker, and even one of the mob. So who could be left?



In Jesus' Passion there are many characters, but perhaps some of the most important are the disciples. Jesus had many, many, disciples, students who walked and learned from Him. Among those there were twelve who were particularly close to Jesus, and played a very special role. As we've already seen one of the twelve Judas will be eternally lost in just a few short hours, on this very night. A night we call Maundy<sup>1</sup> Thursday, or sometimes Holy Thursday. The night Jesus gave the Lord's Supper to His disciples, and the Holy Christian Church.

Who were these eleven other disciples of Jesus? They were a motley ragtag bunch. Several were regular working men, fishermen by trade. One started out as a traitor and a thief to his own people, working for Rome as a tax collector. One was a zealot. We would call him a terrorist today. Some were quick tempered. Some were always waxing and waning between faithfulness and doubt. All of them had the most esteemed privilege of walking and learning from the Creator and Author of Life, Jesus Himself.

Now, as the hours race quickly by, heading toward Jesus' death, these men gather together for an evening Passover meal they will never forget. It is a night we must never forget. The evening starts off with Jesus doing something no one else in the room would have ever considered doing themselves. It was a lowly job. A job for the lowest slave. Jesus got a bowl, poured water into it, and washed the disciples' feet. Now it was not out of the ordinary to wash ones feet when entering a house. Walking in the dry sand with sandals would cover your feet with thin sand and dust. Water was often provided at the entrance to a house, but the person who did the washing was a slave. Yet in this case it was Jesus, the Master, the Teacher, the Holy Messiah of God, God's own Son, who did the washing. Jesus lowered Himself to the lowest of slaves that night for His disciples.

You can only imagine what these men thought. They themselves would never stoop to such a degrading level. Peter was the one who spoke out. "You will never wash my feet!"

1 'Maundy' is a Latin word that means 'command.' From Jesus' words, "A new command I give to you that you love one another." Words He spoke on this night.

Jesus responded to Peter's outburst with a quiet simple remark, "Unless I wash your feet you will never have eternal life."

Peter, always swinging to the extremes said, "Then wash my whole body!"

To which Jesus responded, "Your feet are enough Peter."

What was Jesus doing when He degraded Himself this way? Why did He lower Himself to do the work of the lowest of slaves? He was showing them how much He loved them. He was getting them ready to understand what was about to happen to Him and why. He was getting ready to die for them.

These men, whose feet Jesus washed, were to become the leaders of the New Testament Church. The Old Testament, the Old Contract, was nearly done. By the end of tomorrow, Good Friday, the Old Testament will end, when Jesus says, "It is finished!"<sup>2</sup> The Old Testament will come to a close, and the New Testament will be born. These men are the ones whom Jesus has chosen to take that message, the message of salvation and forgiveness, into all the world.

Did the disciples learn the lesson? Eventually, but not right away. Only shortly after Jesus washed their feet, they got trapped up in a discussion about who would be the greatest. Sometimes it is hard to understand how the Christian Church got started with these men at the helm, but that is the miracle of God. He often chooses the least skilled, the least qualified, to do His work, so that no one can boast.<sup>3</sup>

Were the disciples so different from people today? How many preachers on TV, or maybe even in churches you've visited, brag about their own holiness and piety? How many get trapped up in their own arrogance, and self-praise? They serve, but they want everyone to know how they've served. They want to make sure they get the recognition they believe they deserve. The disciples were regular men just like you and me. Just people who sometimes too easily fall into the traps Satan sets.



Jesus knew that about His disciples. He knew how difficult it would be for them. He knew Satan was on the prowl to bring them down.<sup>4</sup> So what did He do for them? How did He provide for their support and strength after he would be gone? He gave them bread with the words, "This is My Body."<sup>5</sup> He gave them wine with

2 John 19:30  
3 Ephesians 2:8-9  
4 Luke 22:31  
5 Luke 22:19

the word, “This is My Blood.”<sup>6</sup> He said, “This I give to you for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Jesus gave them that Holy Supper to support them and help them through. It would be through that Holy Supper that they would maintain contact with their Savior and Lord. In that Holy Meal they would be forgiven, strengthened, and encouraged in the one true Christian faith that would lead them out into the world, to share the Good News of salvation to others, to share that one true Christian faith that would lead them to eternal life.

That same meal is still served in our time. Here, on so many Sundays, that same Holy Meal of Jesus’ body and blood, in, with, and under, the bread and wine, have been received by the faithful at this altar. That meal will be celebrated and enjoyed by us on this very night, as we remember the night Jesus gave it to His disciples, and us. He gave it to us for the same reasons He gave it to them. He gave it to us so we could be forgiven, strengthened, and encouraged in the one true Christian faith that will lead us out into the world to share the Good News of salvation to others, to share that one true Christian faith that will lead them to eternal life.

Now what about those eleven faithful men? What happens to them? Do they remain faithful to the end? Do they stand with Jesus through any and all trials? Do they stand against all comers? No. They run. They flee. They hide. They nearly quit and go back to their ordinary lives. Back to fishing. It almost died, but Jesus knew His disciples, and on Easter, He will make them and us, alive again in Him.

Those disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost will become heroes of the faith, and our own examples to follow. They will in their own lives reach the far corners of the earth. They will travel the world from Spain to India. They will travel to Greece, Rome, and all over Africa. They will preach the truths and promises of God to all people in all nations, just as Jesus told them, and us, to do.<sup>7</sup>

They will take huge risks. All of them will be hunted down. They will be captured. They will be executed in horrible wicked ways. Yet not one of them will ever waiver. Not one of them will ever compromise. Not one of them will fall pray to the temptation to give up and go home. They will be used to write the second half of the Bible, the New Testament. Through their writings we will learn, and carry on their work of extending God’s Church and God’s kingdom.

Those men became the servants they could not imagine being tonight, this Thursday night, when Jesus washed their feet. They did become everything Jesus

6 Luke 22:20

7 Matthew 28:19-20

knew they would be. It is because of them that you have heard the Words of God. It is through their obedient work that the Holy Spirit has brought faith to you and for that reason you have heard the words of eternal life.

Now Jesus turns to us. As he gives us, this evening, His Body and Blood for our forgiveness, strength and encouragement, will we do less than offer ourselves in return as living sacrifices to His cause? Jesus comforts us; let us bring His eternal comfort to others. Jesus died for all the world; let us do our part in telling the world what that means. Jesus came, as the Servant of God, and washed us clean from all sin; let us go from here and be servant in His Church. Leading all people to the Words of eternal life in Jesus' name. Amen.