

Title: Loving Actions

Let us pray.

Most holy, Lord God, your son taught the disciples with actions as well as words before he was taken from them; may we also join the disciples in the breaking of the bread and loving one another as we are loved by you and by Christ Jesus, through whom we pray. Amen.

The synoptic writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, focus on Jesus' last Thursday with what has come to be known as the Last Supper. Not John. And he was there! John is more interested in what Jesus said rather than what he did. Also, the synoptics imply that the Passover was Thursday. Not so John. And he was there! The supper was the day before the Passover. (Having said this, John may have a theological agenda for moving the Passover forward a day.)

Jesus' agenda is love. That is the theme for the evening. Jesus knew what was coming and rather than run, Jesus was going to face it out of love for his friends and us. In spite of this, Judas was on a different course and with a different agenda.

While they were eating, Jesus decides he was going to wash their feet. The story is well known and was repeated again tonight. This was a way for Jesus to do more than talk about love but to demonstrate it. And of course, Peter was slow to catch on.

Jesus suspected that the rest might not be tuned into what happened and why. Peter was just brave enough to verbalize his ignorance.

The washing of the feet was an example of servant leadership. Servant leadership is actions of a leader for the followers. Jesus is demonstrating how these future leaders of the church are to lead. Jesus is impressing on them how the church is to be once Jesus is gone.

The church has been around for centuries. How did we do?

The Episcopal Church is a church of bishops. Bishops have a significant amount of power in any diocese, but that power is limited concerning the

laity, but is more pronounced to the clergy. We have Presiding Bishop who has limited power and is mainly an administrator and a cheerleader. The Presiding Bishop has little power over any bishop.

In contrast, the Roman church has power concentrated in the Pope and the curia. That power trickles down to the bishops and priests and is held over the laity. Pope Francis is a good guy and is well liked by us more than some Catholics. But not every Pope will be a good guy (and they will be guys).

Many evangelical churches don't bother with bishops, mainly because their history is one of not trusting the power of bishops. Yet there are pastors who wield great power over their people.

This is kind of a follow-up to the Anglican series this Lent. This is also a narrow look at power that I mentioned Sunday. We have not figured out how to organize ourselves in a strictly servant leader model and still stay organized. I can't tell you if Jesus is shaking his head or not. I can tell you Jesus knows us and how hard we try to do right even when we fail.

Assisted by Margaret, I will soon wash your feet for those of you who wish to avail yourself of that. My feet probably should not see the light of day. But this reminds me of the role humble leadership is to happen in a parish.

In all of this, Jesus keeps Judas in the back of his mind. Judas is ignoring this teaching. We don't know what Judas expected to happen once Jesus was out of the way. It would have been nice if Judas was interviewed by someone, but that did not seem to happen. Maybe Judas expected Jesus to come to his full power to vanquish the powers in Jerusalem. If Judas thought that, then he really didn't get the servant leadership thing.

Judas didn't understand that Jesus was glorified in the moment before his betrayal. In Judas' worldview a leader is not glorified during an arrest. They usually pull a coat over their head while the press clicks away.

Jesus explains why servant leadership is important. They and we are to love one another as Jesus loves us. Jesus' love was and is unconditional. Jesus doesn't say it, but Jesus probably loved Judas. When Jesus said that he loved them, he didn't say, "Well, all of you except Judas." Jesus made no exceptions.

I wouldn't be surprised if many of you saw this story of a Texas waitress that was in many news stories a few weeks ago.

Evoni Williams, 18, works in a waffle house in La Marque, Texas. She is saving money to go to college. An elderly man got his courage to ask Evoni to cut his ham. Evoni said, "I was just like, Sure! If you need help, that's what I am here for. My cook was calling my name to pick up food I had on the board, but I continued to cut his ham."

A regular, Adrien Charpentier, was on oxygen and was recently released from a hospital. He had weakness in his hands and arms.

A customer recorded the event, posted it to social media, and the rest is history. Evoni was awarded a \$16,000 scholarship to Texas Southern University.

It is the love we have for one another that lets the world know we are followers of Jesus. It is not a General Convention. It is not a papal enclave. It is our caring for each other. Now, I need to add that it is hard to care for someone who is hurting if that hurt is kept to one's self. We want to always put on a happy face, even if we are not happy inside. We also need to love one another enough to trust one another with our hurts.

I have seen a great deal of care and concern by the people of this parish. This is a strength. Don't let organizational challenges deter you from this care. But structure yourself so that people don't slip through the cracks. Of course, most of all, love one another as you are loved by Christ.

Text: **John 13:1–17** (NRSV)

**13** Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.<sup>2</sup> The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper<sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,<sup>4</sup> got up from the table,<sup>a</sup> took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.<sup>5</sup> Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you

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<sup>a</sup> Gk *from supper*#

going to wash my feet?”<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”<sup>8</sup> Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.”<sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet,<sup>b</sup> but is entirely clean. And you<sup>c</sup> are clean, though not all of you.”<sup>11</sup> For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

<sup>12</sup> 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?”<sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am.<sup>14</sup> So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.<sup>15</sup> For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.<sup>16</sup> Very truly, I tell you, servants<sup>d</sup> are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.<sup>17</sup> If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>b</sup> Other ancient authorities lack *except for the feet*

<sup>c</sup> The Greek word for *you* here is plural

<sup>d</sup> Gk *slaves*

<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version\*](#). (1989). (Jn 13:1–17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.