

Maundy Thursday 2010  
Pastor Tim Koester

### Living, like you're dying, with Love

Perhaps this isn't the best time to tell you but I need to be upfront with all of you since you have invested a lot in my family and me. It simply wouldn't be fair if I kept this from you any longer so here goes... I have a terminal condition. I don't know how long I will be with you or how long I will have to spend with my family. The only thing I do know is that someday this will all end. And as much as I wish it were only an April Fools prank, it is not.

**Of course, that is the reality for all of us.** Each of us has the same 'terminal condition' called... *living*. It seems to be a rare thing in the universe and exists individually for only a short time. So I am going to die... no it would be better to say I AM dying because I read somewhere that after age 25 the body already begins the process of dying. We are all on borrowed time.

**This is nothing new.** Philosophers and theologians and mystics of all kinds have commented on the tragic irony that something so beautiful, so full of creativity and possibility, so desirable as LIFE, should only last for such a short time. Usually there are calls to make the most of every second, to live in the moment, to do something different than what you are normally doing. In short, Tim McGraw (and others) say you should "*live like you were dying*".

Now that's not bad advice. Even though we all know that life is a terminal condition, we put it out of our mind. We take people for granted. We put off until tomorrow, what should be done now. Our selfish actions disregard that fact that we are but dust and to dust we shall return. So it is good to listen to songs on the radio that remind us that we are living on borrowed time. It is good to have a "bucket list" of things to do before we kick the actual bucket to help us avoid the consequences of low expectations. Even Jesus knew that the hours of his life on earth were limited and that there would be an end to his days with friends and followers.

So what does Jesus do on the last day of his life? What would you do if you were fairly certain you would die tomorrow? Would there be drastic changes? Is there unfinished 'business' you need to accomplish? Would your *living* change because of your *dying*?

On his final night with the disciples, Jesus shows them what real *living* is all about. In three of the gospel accounts, he shares a special meal with the disciples where Jesus himself becomes the sustenance, the food, upon which their living is based. Tonight we will celebrate once again the Great Thanksgiving meal

where God promises to be present among us, feeding us with the very life force of Jesus. It is a gift of grace that empowers us to be truly alive, despite the fact that our bodies continue on the march toward death.

But in the gospel of John, we do not read about the celebration of this special meal, although Jesus and the disciples are certainly gathered to celebrate the Jewish Passover meal together. Before they begin however, Jesus does something very odd on his last night with the disciples. **He shows them how to live like they are dying with love.** On this last night, when he could have done anything to prepare them for his departure from this world, he chose to wash their feet. Jesus chose to pass on to them a different way of living in the world, a different way of leadership, a different way of loving one another.

Loving, in the way that Jesus loves, is not about holding on. It is about giving up status or power or rights or anything else that would prevent someone from meeting another person right where they are. [Living, like you are dying with love](#) means that no matter how much time you have left in the world, you can live without regrets and without fear. Love is bigger than any one person and any one life and because of Jesus, we know that God's love is bigger even than death.

Washing the feet of someone removed the dirt that resulted from living in the world. It gave people a fresh start, a clean feeling. That sounds a lot like what *forgiveness* does. Perhaps what Jesus chooses to do on his last evening with his friends is to show them, in very practical terms, that the love he intends for them to share with the world is a love that gives people fresh starts. It is a love that cleanses, forgives and heals. Perhaps Jesus is showing them that [living like you are dying with love](#) is the power to wash away the hurt we endure and the pain we cause because that is the only way to avoid dying with regret and fear.

And if the songs and the movies about people who are contemplating their impending death connect with us, it is because in some way, they speak this truth. We all make mistakes. We all realize that life is short. We know we should live like we are ready to die at any time but we don't -- so that makes [forgiving](#) the most important part of living. Forgiveness is the great gift of God that transforms lives. Forgiveness is love that has hands and feet and a towel. Forgiveness is nourishment that gives life to all who eat and drink it.

Tonight we have heard again Jesus' new command, his new mandate, that we love one another as he has loved us. Love preaches the gospel. Love forgives wrongs. Love lowers our own power and status and position in order to raise someone else up. Love is what God has done for us. Let us give thanks for this amazing grace. Let us be nourished by it and let us live like we are dying in the promise of love... and life without end. Amen.