

Maundy Thursday  
March 29, 2018  
Preached by the Rev. Lisa M. Erdeljon  
St Michael's Episcopal Church, Barrington, IL  
Exodus 12:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35

“Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of His Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully, in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord.”

-- Opening Collect for tonight's worship service.

### Communion

“The Sacrament of His Body and Blood”

- Tonight's Epistle: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
- Words of Institution... “On the night he was betrayed...” (Euch. Prayer C)
  - Invites us into the tradition of story and promise
  - Proclaims forgiveness and eternal life
- Jesus's body and blood = A new covenant (as we pray during Eucharist and as we read in Epistle)
  - Body and blood = Jesus's presence to us per His promise
    - New covenant = that we are God's people
    - Saved                      • This time, from inside                      • spiritual change

### Passover

Old Testament reading is full of good narrative and theology  
(and some problem areas, too, but that's for another sermon)

- Narrative in Egypt before great Exodus
  - Remember story?
    - Israelites are enslaved in Egypt
    - Moses is chosen by God to be their leader
    - Asks Pharaoh to “Let my people go”
    - When Pharaoh refuses to budge, God intercedes and sends plagues
    - 10 of them: 1. Water into blood; 2. Frogs; 3. Lice; 4. Flies (or scorpions—translation is loose there); 5. Diseased livestock; 6. Boils; 7. Storms of hail and fire; 8. Locusts; 9. Darkness for three days...
    - And 10... Death of the first born son
  - Final plague to hit before Pharaoh listens to Moses
- Passover lamb as sacrifice to God
  - Passover lamb becomes a way to show God that Israelites are in a home and not to harm the residents
  - Or perhaps to remind the Israelites that they are God's chosen people?
- A promise that the Israelites will be saved, as God's chosen people

### Remembrance

Both of these acts (Communion and Passover) are done “In remembrance...”

- Passover: “This day shall be a day of Remembrance for you.”
- Communion: “Do this... in remembrance of me.”
- All we do should be done “in remembrance of” or “in honor of” Jesus
  - As Christians, we are called to live like Jesus
    - (Today’s Gospel reading) “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you”

What does that mean? What do we do?

- The New Commandment in today’s Gospel:
  - “That you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”
- And so we live our lives as Jesus lived His.
  - We practice servant ministry (foot washing)
  - We love one another...
- But we must do it all “in remembrance of” Jesus Christ’s love for us.

### Foot washing

- Jesus loved us to the Cross
  - To death
  - And to Resurrection
- Loved us to get on the floor and wash our feet!
  - At the time, feet were gross!
    - Sandals; • Unpaved streets; • No sewers; • Misunderstanding of germs and illness

*In India, and in Hindu, feet are the lowest of the low.*

- *Touching someone’s feet is reserved for the lowest level of servant*
- *Inversely, it is also an act of utmost respect—as if to say, “I am not worthy so much as to touch the dirt on the bottom of your feet.”*

*\*\*\*Sound familiar? John the Baptist says someone will come after him: “I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals” (Mark 1:7; John 1:27)*

But Jesus is doing just this!

- Just as He overthrows all other assumptions of a Messiah...
- He overthrows one more assumption...

And becomes the Servant of All

Tonight, we remember—we institute—the Last Supper and Foot Washing...

And we are invited into Jesus’s last night, into the narrative that opens the Passion, in three ways:

1. Washing one another’s feet
2. Partaking in a Remembrance of the Last Supper
3. Loving one another as Christ loves us!

That last one is the easiest and hardest!

- No one expects any of us to hang from a cross because Jesus already did that

- But we are expected to serve
  - To be worthy of the New Covenant
  - To love beyond “unconditionally”

\*\*\*And when we fail, we can come back here

- To Jesus Christ
- To the Altar
- To Holy Eucharist

And be reminded again and again that Jesus’s love is the greatest

- (And the greatest gift given to us = Grace)

Frederick Buechner offers definitions:

- A **sacrament** is when something holy happens. It is transparent time, time which you can see through to something deep inside.
- A **ritual** is the ceremonial acting out of the profane in order to show forth its sacredness.

In The Episcopal Church:

- Holy Communion = a Sacrament
- Foot washing = a ritual

Buechner continues:

\*\*\*A sacrament is God offering God’s holiness to us. A ritual is our raising up the holiness of our humanity to God.

And so, let us offer up the holiness of our humanity to God, as God offers God’s holiness to us.

Let us do as Jesus commanded us to do: “do as I have done for you” and “love one another”... and partake in tonight’s rituals and sacraments “In remembrance of” Jesus and His love for us.

Amen.