

Maundy Thursday
April 21, 2011

Exodus 12:1–4[5–10] 11–14
Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19
1 Corinthians 11:23–26
John 13:1–17, 31b–35

I.N.I.

*That priceless grace, that priceless grace,
That priceless grace, which gave me life:
Jesus' life is priceless grace,
That priceless grace is life for me.*

--Emmanuel Grantson, Ghanan melody ELW 591

Welcome to the Triduum, the Three Days. We are crossing a threshold, into a holy time. We have made it through Lent with the spiritual practices of prayer, fasting, and giving.

In this paschal time, everything is heightened. Rituals, stories, song, prayer, the holy community are all magnified. The Three Days are a single piece, a procession, a progression, one continuous liturgy.

Now we are on the verge of...Now we are anticipating the Passover from death to life, as on tiptoe.

I invite you to relish the time as a gift, a gift to the church, a gift of the church. Christ is offering himself to us, as the path to God, through his body, through his life, through his death, through his resurrection.

We enter into this paschal mystery with forgiveness, the washing of feet, sharing the peace. We eat bread and drink wine at the meal of reconciliation and new life, taking Christ's body and blood into our bodies.

Today we are awed by Christ is offering himself to the world, in love, on his knees, as we love one another, on our knees.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus' focus is resolute. In the Gospel of John, Jesus knows exactly what he is saying. He knows exactly what he is doing. From the beginning of the Gospel, this fourth Gospel, Jesus is in control. From the very beginning, we know that Jesus is the divine Son of God, the Word made flesh, God con carne. Throughout the Gospel it's drummed into us, that it is Jesus who is living water, the bread of life, the light of the world, the resurrection and the life.

Like a laser beam this Jesus presents himself as larger than life, intent on gathering all to this life, this abundant life, this life that flows from God and to God. Up to this point, Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, is shining brightly, right in front of our face.

Now Jesus is heading toward his glory. He is crossing a threshold. In this gospel of John, in this chapter of John, Jesus knows that his hour has come. He is at his holy time, now focusing on the end of his life.

Previous to this, through his signs, and by his sayings, he has drawn a following.

Now he is drawn to the great and final sign, this glory on the cross, this enthronement from the place of his death. As the drumbeat grows in volume, as this pull toward Jesus' final days and final hours and dreadful and glorious Passover increases, at the crossroad between his ministry and his glory, in today's Gospel scene, Jesus flips Peter on his head by coming to wash his feet.

Peter "knows" what's going on. (No, he doesn't). Peter gets what Jesus is doing by washing everyone's feet. (Nope) Peter rightly takes umbrage at Jesus taking on the job of the trash collector, the car wash attendant, the janitor, the cleaning lady. (No. He doesn't have a clue what's happening).

Jesus is set for Jerusalem and what is to come. Jesus is inviting his followers to this life, this abundant life, this life that flows from God, from the perspective of the cross. Jesus has to work hard with Peter as he says "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." It's only then that Peter turns 180 degrees to ask Jesus to hose him down completely.

There are times when I absolutely get it, when I know that God's justice is the thing, when in righteous anger I declare that the downtrodden have had enough, when I know that the arms of welcome are not extended widely enough. And I'm very convincing in these convictions.

Then I hear the Gospel and realize the depths of love that Jesus goes through. Did he wash Judas' feet? Yes he did. Did he love? Judas. I guess so!

As Jesus talks about his glorification, with the weighty words *Now the Son of Man has been gloried*, five words were left out that preceded tonight's reading. The words were ***when he had gone out***, referring to Judas, the betrayer, the one whose feet were washed but who had gone out to hand Jesus over. As Jesus talks about his glorification, his enthronement on the cross, he gives this commandment to show the depth he will go to draw all to that life with God: *love one another as I have loved you*.

That means Judas, and all who betray. This means all those on the fringes. This means those like Peter who protest too much. We are to go to where Jesus goes, to find and to love and to forgive, even when it is dark and deadly. This great reconciliation project, demonstrated by Jesus on his knees and later on the cross, brings us to our knees.

I thought it was pretty cool, washing my own father's feet one Maundy Thursday. I thought, well, he must have surely held me as a baby and now the tables are turned. I'm serving him. I'm kneeling and washing him. Dear old dad was weeping each time I poured water and dried him off. After worship, I said, "you were really moved by that footwashing. I saw you crying. You were moved by your own son washing your feet, weren't you?" Dad said, "no, I was thinking

about Jesus, and his love.” Right.

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