

Sermon
Maundy Thursday
April 6th, 2023
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa
The Reverend Victoria Scott

Here we are: Maundy Thursday. A night when we hear from John's Gospel that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples as they shared a meal. A night when Jesus gave the disciples a new "mandate" - a new commandment – that they love one another as he had loved them. There are certainly threads of love, service, and humility that wind their way through this Gospel passage. I see those threads of love and service and humility in the tapestry that is our shared life here at Ascension and may that weaving continue! But, those aren't the threads that I want to pick up this evening. The threads I'm going to pick up are threads of life and death. The thread I want to offer you for your life's tapestry is the thread of self-discovery...

Jesus knows what is coming. And we, on this side of the Resurrection, know too. Jesus is prepared to die. Jesus is prepared to love to the end. Jesus is prepared as Richard Rohr says "...to become the crucified so that we will stop crucifying." The question for us is: Are we prepared? Are we

prepared to love to the end? Are we prepared to die to the self-centered parts of our humanity that cling to power and status and control? Are we prepared to die to the parts of ourselves that limit or inhibit God's love?

Jesus, in washing the disciples' feet, is preparing them to die. He is preparing them to die to all that inhibits the living out of the mandate – the command – to love one another as he has loved them. The “turning around” of the social system of the day that Jesus did throughout his earthly ministry is in that water. That water washes away barriers. It washes away one-sided power and control. It washes away self-centeredness and selfishness. It prepares the disciples to die to the parts of themselves that “get in the way” of walking the path that Jesus walked. It prepares the disciples to walk the path of God's love with and for each other. With and for the world.

This evening draws us into the dark parts of Holy Week. Into the abandonment of Gethsemane. Into betrayal. Into agony and suffering and death. In those dark emotions, there is room for our own dying. Our own dying to selfishness. Our own dying to power and control.

Yes, Jesus dies, but we know that he also lives! And, in our own dying to the things that inhibit the living out of the command to love – a

command not just for the disciples, but for us, for all the world – we have an opportunity for self-discovery. In dying to the things that get in the way, we have the opportunity to discover that our truest selves are found in relationship. We have an opportunity to be alive to our truest selves and our fullest living. We have an opportunity to come alive to fullest living, found in and through acknowledging the deep connections between all people and all things.

The lectionary doesn't include it this evening, but not only did Jesus wash the disciples feet, he also took bread and wine, and made a new covenant. We will share in that new covenant – we will share in the Eucharist – this evening, before we move into the darkness of Gethsemane, before we make our way to the foot of the cross tomorrow. There is life in our Eucharist. I invite you to taste that life. Taste the life and love that God offers in and through Jesus, again and again. Let it sustain you in what lies ahead. Let it prepare you to die to the things that inhibit God's love in your life, in yourself. Let it prepare you to discover your truest self. Let it sustain you through darkness, and suffering and death with the promise of life and love, forever made new in Jesus. In his name. Amen.