

Maundy Thursday, A✘D 2009

John 13:1-15, 34-35 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?" ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

In the name of the Father and of the ✘ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Children know the song. He's got the whole world in His hands. But what comfort is there in knowing that? Especially if you're Peter. Indeed, it's true: He does have the whole world in His hands. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around His waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around Him." No way, Peter protested, "You shall never wash my feet!"

2 Feet are disgusting, shameful. People are grossed out by the thought of touching another person's sweaty, clammy foot that's been in a shoe all day. How much more so if the foot's sweaty and dust-covered from walking the streets of Jerusalem, searching all day for a place to prepare the Passover meal? And yet, knowing the Father had given all things into His hands, Jesus took into His hands the feet of His disciples. All power, all authority is in Jesus' hands—the whole world even—and He takes His disciples' feet. Can there be a more shameful

body part? Perhaps, but the Lord took that into His hands, too, marking His covenantal people with circumcision.

3 All things were given into His hands; Jesus has all authority. Nothing is above Him. And yet, nothing was beneath Him. He stooped to the lowest point, assumed the posture of a slave: the lowest, vilest position, the foot-washer. Nothing was beneath Him. And He commands you to have the same attitude, the same posture of service: “I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you...A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

4 This is the Christian’s calling: to love. Even the name for this holy day comes from the Latin for commandment, *mandatum*, from the Lord’s words: “a new commandment I give you.” Love one another. In your vocations, love one another, following the example of the Savior’s servile foot-washing. Nothing is beneath you. Parents, you love by taking in your hands your child’s dirty diapers; you love by setting aside your own priorities, sacrificing your own pleasures for the good of your children. Spouses, you love by setting your own needs aside and tending first to the needs of your husband or wife; you love by taking the self-sacrificial role. Neighbors, you love by taking the shame, the lowliness, the poverty, of those around you, those in need of your mercy, even at the expense of your own pride or pocketbook. Christian, you love by serving.

5 It’s dirty work and usually thankless. But that’s the nature of Christian love. If you do good to be noticed, repent. If you consider your own needs before the needs of others, repent. If you recoil at servile things, repent. If the One into whose hands the Father had given all things did not hesitate to take His disciples’ dirty, shameful feet, nothing is beneath you.

6 Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, Jesus not only took the role of the lowest servant, He also took the death of a slave. This is how you know what love is, that Jesus laid down His life for you. He’s got the whole world in His hands, but that’s not most

important. What matters most in His hands are sin and shame that He takes from you and the nails driven through His hands. Nothing was beneath Him, not even taking human flesh for the sole purpose of dying the shameful death of a convicted criminal. But for your sake, beloved, nothing was beneath the Lord. He descended to the deepest depths of death; He died the death you deserved—separated from God.

7 And He desires to make you clean. Those who have been washed in the waters of Holy Baptism have been cleansed. “The one who has bathed has no need to wash, except for his feet.” Confession is a bit like having the Lord wash your feet. It’s shameful to speak out loud your sins, to be sure. It’s harrowing to have to come face to face with your dirty feet. But the Lord who has all authority and all power in His hands desires to take the filthiness of your sins into His hands. And He desires to place His hand upon you and say, “I forgive you.” If I do not wash you, you have no share with me. Nothing is beneath the Lord, not even taking your shameful sins and making them His own, not even taking His holiness and giving it to you. That’s how you have been loved.

8 There are actually two mandates we celebrate on Maundy Thursday. On the same night when He washed His disciples’ feet, on the same night when He was betrayed, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat.” In the same way, he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take, drink, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this.” Do this. What you eat in His Supper is the Body of Jesus. What you drink is His Blood. These precious gifts deliver the forgiveness that Jesus won for you by His death on the cross.

9 And no one eats or drinks alone. The whole Church of Christ, His Body, is united at His table. That’s why these mandates go hand-in-hand. Love one another as you have been loved. And do this in remembrance of me. You cannot eat the Body of Christ without loving your fellow members in the Body of Christ. You cannot drink the Blood of Christ without loving those others for whom His Blood was shed. That which forgives your sins also enables you to forgive one

another. That which is proof of your Lord's love for you enables you to love one another. Being served by the Lord with His Body and Blood enables you to go forth and serve one another with your flesh and blood. Because nothing is held against you, nothing is beneath you.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
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