

Apostles Anglican Church

Maundy Thursday

17 April 2025

Fr. Rob Goebel

Main Text: Luke 22:14–30, John 13:1–15

Supporting Text: Exod 12:1–14, 1 Cor 11:23–34

Title: The Night of Humble Glory

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, you gave your Apostles grace truly to believe and to preach your word: Grant that we might love what they believed and preach what they taught through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

—

Introduction

Tonight, our journey through Holy Week finds us with Christ and His disciples as they celebrate the passover together. What the disciples didn't know then, that we know now, is that this is the first celebration of Christ's Body and Blood. On that night, not only did our Lord institute the Eucharist, but He also washed the feet of the disciples.

Our Anglican tradition calls us not merely to bring the events of that night to mind but to remember them by participating in them, and we'll do just that here in a few minutes.

Being some of the last things our Lord did and said to his disciples elevates the events of that night to a higher level of attention and importance. So, before we participate in the foot washing and the Eucharist, let's take some time to consider the events of that night.

At first blush, these two things might seem to have little connection. On one hand, Jesus shares the Eucharist with disciples, and on the other hand, he washes their feet. To understand the connection, we need to start at the end and work backwards.

In the verses just after our Gospel reading, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment. In fact, from this verse we get the term “Maundy.” It comes from Latin and means “new commandment.”¹

Listen to what Jesus tells the disciples in verse 34,

*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**.*

Love each other, Jesus says, in the same way I have loved you.

In this context, Jesus' acts of sharing himself with the disciples in the Eucharist and the washing of the disciples' feet become living sermon illustrations of how He wants the disciples and us, in turn, to love.

These acts taken together represent the fullness of God's greatest commandments to us.

In the Breaking of Bread, we find the command to love God; to love God by participating in His life.

And in the washing of feet, we find the command to love others. To love others through humble service.

Transition

Jesus isn't the kind of person to say “do as I say not as I do.” He says, “watch me, and do what I do.”

¹ An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, p. 325

1 – Following Christ's Example of Humble Service

Jesus presents Himself as the example of humble, loving service by washing the disciples' feet. Regarded as such a humiliating task, even a Hebrew slave couldn't be compelled to wash feet. Normally, the host would provide guests with water so they could wash their own feet.² But instead, Jesus (the Host) does it for them. He becomes a living sermon, demonstrating what it means to love others through humble service.

What Christ does before He washes the disciples' feet is important too. Chapter 13 verse 4, tells us, He got up from the table and

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.

The Master of All, the Creator of Creation, takes off His outer garments and ties a towel around his waist.

And then humbling Himself all the more, He wipes the filth off their feet.

What humility!

But this kind of humble service is no new thing for the God the Son. In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul writes:

Though [Christ] was in the form of God, [He] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.³

God the Son debases himself for us by taking on our likeness and, through His sacrifice, wipes away our transgressions.

After Jesus had washed the Disciples' feet, he didn't say to them, alright, you're clean now, and leave it at that. No, the goodness of God always comes with a

² Chris Church, "Footwashing," in Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 592.

³ Philippians 2:7

commission. The commission is to share what you have received with others. So, after he washed their feet, Jesus told the disciples,

*If I . . . your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, **that you also should do just as I have done to you.***

Jesus says, now it's your turn to love others through humble service.

This humility is what Jesus wants his disciples to be characterized by when he leaves them, and this is the way Christ calls us to love others!!

Humble service that might include humiliation and possibly even death. More likely than not, most of us won't be called upon to give our lives for another person. But we might be called upon to die in some other way. To give up a dream we have in the endeavor to serve others.

I think of my dad as an example of this. He has had to sacrifice many hopes and dreams over the last 55 years to care for my brother Chris, who is handicapped. Taking care of a person who can't care for themselves is tiring, difficult, and often calls upon a caregiver to do unpleasant tasks that a person would normally do for themselves.

Because he cares for Chris, Dad can't always do what he wants to do or go where he would like. If you ask my dad, he will tell you he has no regrets, but doing this work cost him something. It's a kind of death. Sacrifice is always a kind of death.

Jesus commands us to love one another in humility, through acts of service. And he demonstrated what he meant in both washing the disciples' feet and in the breaking of the bread.

Transition

What Christ demonstrated in the washing of the disciples' feet is brought to fullness in the breaking of bread.

2 – The Table of Our Lord

The size of what our Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed for us in humble service is enormous.

He left his throne in heaven and sacrificed His place for a time that we might be redeemed.

He took on flesh, becoming man, and lived among us. The one in whom all things were made became one of his creations, and instead of living in heaven with God, he lived among US. This is a huge sacrifice!

Think about it: When God the Son took on flesh and became man, his nature changed FOREVER. He became “The God Man”, being both fully God and fully man. When he was resurrected, his physical body was raised, and He remains fully man. That God would mar his nature with the likeness of man is for us a level of humility that I will never be able to comprehend.

But he went beyond that! In humble service, he gave up his life on the cross for our salvation, that by his stripes we might be healed.

All that Christ sacrificed for us comes together in the Eucharist. His sacrifice is latent within His body and blood.

This is the ultimate humble service! And we should follow his example and take up our crosses and follow him.

But participation in his sacrifice is also the Way we enjoy life in the Triune God.

This is how we love and worship God. We participate in his life first and foremost at the Altar.

This is also the place where we receive the love and life of God. When Jesus lifts up the bread and wine and says, take this, he is offering you the very life of God.

Here we become one with Christ and through him one with each other, for although we are many, we are all one because we all partake of the one cup.

All of this together is why the table is life for us. It is the axis on which the universe revolves.

In a world that knows no distinction between good and evil, reality and illusion, the table of Christ is the only place we can find pure, unadulterated truth, because Jesus is the truth. If we wait too long to come to His Altar, the evil and illusion begin to infect our souls and minds; soon, we have lost the sense of what is good and real. So we need to come back week after week to receive Him who is truth.

It is at the Altar, where we meet our Lord in a real way. But he's not the only one we find there.

I'm firmly convinced that because God is not bound by the constants of time and space, the Eucharist that Christ celebrated with the disciples is the same Eucharist that we will celebrate in a few minutes.

And when you come to the Altar rail to gather at the table, you will be gathered with Christ and His disciples, and with the whole company of Heaven.

This is a humbling place to find ourselves because . . .

(Turn and move towards the Altar)

At this place, rest all of Redemption History.

Here, all of God's plans come together.

This is where we are set free from sin and death.

This is the place where heaven and earth meet at the intersection of Christ's body and Blood. It's the ultimate example of humble service.

Transition

It's no wonder these two events stand side by side; they both demonstrate the kind of service Christ calls us to. Jesus says to us, "watch me, and do what I do." If we do this, we will have fulfilled the law to love God and love our neighbors.

Conclusion

This is the heart of the Gospel revealed by Christ in the breaking of the bread and the washing of feet.

In humble service to us, God offers us His life, and he calls us in humble service to offer our lives back to him. But that's not the end of it.

Jesus says,

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

The goodness of God always comes with a commission. Christ calls us to love others in the same way he loves us, by offering our lives to one another in humble service. In this way, we serve others and Christ simultaneously.

We do this by participating with God in acts of humble service to others, to the poor and homeless, to the addict, and the stranger, to those in faraway places and those within our homes and in our pews.

And now we get to join Christ in practicing in acts of humble service by washing each other's feet, and later joining in his ultimate humble act of service in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Amen.