Maundy Thursday—Year B
Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14
Psalm 116:1, 10-17
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

There is so much going on in *this night*. At its heart, *this is a night* of ***remembrance***. In **Exodus**, we **hear the LORD tell Moses and Aaron how to prepare the whole congregation of Israel for the passover**. **What food** they were to prepare, **how they were to prepare it**, how they were to **take some of the blood of the lamb and put it on the doorposts and lintel of the house**, **how they were supposed to eat it**: **loins girded, sandals on your feet, and staff in your hand**; **eating it hurriedly**. Because *on this night*, the **LORD was going to pass through the land of Egypt, striking down the first born but preserving life in the homes marked with the blood**. This plague would be the last, and worst, to try to get the oppressor to set God's people free. *This night* would **begin a new journey for the Israelites**, causing them to **leave their homes**, and **cross a sea**, and **endure a wilderness**, **making the trek to a promised land of freedom**, a **future promised** that would take generations to fully taste. And ***the last thing God says*** is that **they will need to mark *this day, always***; it needs to be a **day of *remembrance* for them**.

Remembrance is **more than a memory**. It is the ***action*** of ***remembering*** something. It **isn't a passive activity** at all. It is an ***active* bringing forward of the *past*, bringing it right into your *present*, experiencing the reality of it right here and right now**, knowing that this kind of ***deep remembering*, anamnesis** is the word in Greek, knowing that this kind of ***deep remembering transforms*** us, ***changes*** us, and so ***changes whatever transpires from this point forward***.

Mark this day always, God says, and remember the journey of liberation and the cost of that freedom.

St. Paul tells us the same. **I received this** *and* **I hand it on to you. *This meal*, this meal that we share**, it is ***everything***. I am **handing on to *you* what was handed on to *me***—how **Jesus**, **on the night when he was betrayed, took bread and gave thanks and broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in *remembrance* of me." And how he took the cup in the same way and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in *remembrance* of me."** When *you* **take this bread**, when *you* **drink of this cup**, ***remember***, **Jesus gives you his very body to take into yours**; **Jesus gives you his blood, his lifeforce, to drink into your being**. **Jesus** *never* wanted ***this meal*** to be *just a really great story from long ago* that would be told forever; ***Jesus wants us to know that when we come together around this meal tonight, no time has passed at all.* HE IS HERE**, and he is **inviting us to *remember***, and to **drink him in fully** to **sustain us**, to **transform us**, to **change us at the cellular level**, *from the inside out*, to **strengthen us** to walk through whatever tomorrow may bring. ***It's intimate work that Jesus is about with us this night.***

And if we're not clear on **just how intimate** a work this is, ***he's going to make it crystal clear in John's gospel.***

Jesus is gathered around this table with those whom he has loved. And **during** this **supper** shared, he **gets up** and **takes off his outer robe** and **ties a towel around him**. He **pours water into a basin**, and **bends down**, and **begins to wash the disciples' feet** and to **wipe them dry with the towel that was tied around him.**

It blew their minds. You could see their wheels turning trying to make sense of what they were watching take place right before their eyes. **Peter** asks the question they all were thinking, **"Lord, are you going**

to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "**You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand**." For **Peter**, it was too intimate and too vulnerable and too upside down.

Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus was the **Teacher**, the **Lord**—this *isn't what Teachers and Lords do*, and yes, Jesus is both of those things—he admits as much—but *more* than Teachers *and* Students or Lords and Masters *and* servants, **Jesus** and **those gathered around that table**, **THEY ARE BELOVEDS, and washing one another's feet is an act of love.**

Jesus tells Peter, "Unless I wash you, you have no share *with* me." Notice the preposition there, it's not *"of,"* it's ***"with"***—this is about **COMMUNION**. ***Washing one another's feet as an act of shared vulnerability. Washing one another's feet is an act of communion where everything else is stripped away, and only love remains.*** **That's what Jesus wants us to share. That's the witness and teaching that he wants to leave with his disciples**, *not just then, but now and forever*.

Jesus goes on to say to these beloveds gathered around this table: **Little children, I am with you only a little longer**. **You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you,** '**Where I am going, you cannot come**.' **I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

Jesus is about to make a journey that will **completely** and **utterly transform his presence**. For those who have been accustomed to **knowing his tangible presence in a very particular way**, this is **going to be hard**. It's **going to take all of us to** help us ***remember* everything that he has *given* us**. It's **going to take all of us to *remember* all that he has *shown* us**. It's **going to take all of us to bring forward the *deep memory of this night*** and ***these actions*** *so that* **we can be made new in the image and likeness of this love over and over again** and **leave this place fragrant with this love *that* the world may catch its scent**. After all, **this how everyone will know we're his disciples, if we have this kind of love for one another.**

Ultimately, **this night is a sacrament of *love*** and **the pre-eminent sacrament of *community***. **Washing one another's feet**, this is **how we *remember* what it is that binds us together**, and most importantly, **binds us to our Beloved Lord**.

So, **pour the water**, **caress the tired feet**; **wipe with the towel**; **let another perform this act of love for you**; **take the bread**; **drink the wine**; ***remember* this night as often as you come to this table**. Yes, it's **intimate**, yes, it's **vulnerable**, but **don't push it away**. **Jesus us wants to share with him**, **wants communion with us**, **wants union WITH US**. ***Remember* the love that is flowing all around us *this night*** and ***then* pour that love out everywhere** *so that* **the world may *remember* what Love that's not afraid of the basin and towel looks like**. Amen.

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March 28, 2024