

“Love for One Another”

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Maundy Thursday, 2008

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

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Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.” After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 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.”

Prayer.

“Do I know you?”

Jesus asked,

As if he looked at me for the first time.

“Of course you do,”

I responded,

I’ve been your disciple from my youth.

“You have?”

“How are you known?”

he asked.

“What?” I stammered.

“How am I known?” I echoed.

“Yes,”

“What would others say of you?”

That’s easy,

I thought to myself.

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“He was a family man,”
I said aloud.
“He raised a nice family.”
“Happily married.”
“He moved up the ladder
and retired at the top.”
Jingle, jingle,
I thought to myself.
I even put away enough
To live full,
Do what I wanted to do.
Go where I wanted to go.
I lived life the way I wanted to live it.
I couldn’t help it, but grin.

“What did you leave behind?” he asked,
as if the questions would never end.
O please!
“Let me in, let me in,” my patience waned.
How much can one be expected to endure?
“Answer me this, then,
“What did you leave behind?”

“My attorney made every allowance,”
“She dotted all my I’s and crossed every t.”
My children profited nicely.
By the furrow of his brow,
I could tell he wasn’t pleased.
Uncomfortable silence hung in the air.
Then it dawned on me.
He wants to know about
my charitable contributions.
“Oh,” I drew out the vowel as long as
possible.
“You’d be happy to know
I made sizable contributions
To multiple charities around town.
I even left 10% to the church,”
I said as I bit my lip,
Hoping he wouldn’t catch
My exaggeration.

“I washed my disciples feet,”
he said,
calling to memory the Upper Room story

I learned as a child.
“And when I was done,
I told them,
‘For I have set you an example,
that you also should do
as I have done to you.’”

Now the silence dripped with sweat.
“Oh,” I said,
finding my conscious an inadequate
companion.
“I washed my disciples feet,
for I loved them to the end.”

I loved them,
Echoed in my thoughts
Causing me to consider
“were there any
I truly loved?”
Others loved me,
But had I love others?
“I washed my disciples feet,”
he said again.
“Did I wash yours?”

I was known by my family
as being strong.
Others, especially those at school and work,
said I was wise.
But for the life of me,
I couldn’t imagine one person saying,
“That so-and-so ...
... he loved.
He loved others,
just like Jesus did.”
I had a chance to love,
But instead,
I passed by the other side.
I had a chance to love,
But I let others pull my weight.
I had a chance to love,
But instead, I decided
it was more important to sleep in.
I had a chance to love,
But I always thought

I'd have one more chance.

"My God," I wept,
"Why have you forsaken me?"

"O I haven't," he said
as he stretched out his hands
nailed to the cross.
"I haven't forsaken you.
I've never loved you more
Than this very moment."

"I give you a new commandment,"
I read in my old confirmation Bible,
"that you love one another."

"Yes," I vowed.

It is time.

"Just as I have loved you,
you also should love one another."

"Yes," I vowed.

The time I once let sift through my fingers
Is now the time I no longer have.

Youth has mellowed into middle age.

Middle age now stoops me over and

Has caused me to walk with a cane.

"Place these words upon my lips,"

I pray,

"How may I love you?"

How may I love?

"By this everyone will know
that you are my disciples."
Amen.