

“What Are You Hungry For?”

Maundy Thursday Sermon

The Rev. Dr. Ronnie T. Stout-Kopp+

Maundy Thursday is a central feast day in the life of the Church. It begins in celebration and feasting around the table, then commemorates the feast of the Table, and then ends in lonely silence as Jesus is arrested and taken from our midst by violent hands.

The word “maundy” means “mandate.” This refers to the mandate given to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We hear these words read every Maundy Thursday “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.” This is a mandate and a new commandment, the most difficult of all commandments. Even more than writing these words on our hearts, we need to live them and do them daily. Now, more than ever, in this time of short tempers, paranoia, fear, anxiety, separation, and even depression, we must take our Lord’s commandment to heart. This is not romantic or misty-eyed love. This is divine love infused into every one of us at our Baptism into the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! This is a Love that, with the help of God, will go on loving, even unto eternity: love for each other and love for God in Christ.

Equally, this is the feast day that commemorates the institution of the Last Supper, the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the Eucharist (which means thanksgiving). Our Lord gathers with his friends in the upper room to celebrate the Passover. But He does and says some very strange things. First, Jesus insists on washing his disciples feet. In those days, most people walked barefoot or with sandals and keeping your feet clean would have been a huge challenge. Usually, servants would have washed visitors’ feet, but Jesus himself does this to demonstrate His servant relationship with those at the table. When he returns to His place, He does something that would be have been abhorrent to Jews of the time. Jesus takes the loaf of bread and breaks it saying that it is His body broken for them and us. Then He takes the cup of wine and says that it is His blood poured out for us. He commands us to do this in remembrance of Him, until He comes again - utterly extraordinary words and actions!

Jesus does not say that these common things, bread and wine, are sort of like or simply symbolize His Body and Blood. He says these are His Body and Blood given for you and me. Our faith tells us this is True in the deepest sense of the word. This is ground zero, where it all begins and continues even to today. We gather ‘round the table and we share in His Ever Blessed Body and Blood, His gift to us for the health of our bodies and souls. For this, we give Him thanks and praise!

We end this night in solemn silence and await the heart wrenching and momentous events of Good Friday. May God give us the strength to face the new day. **The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit + go with you this night and remain with you forever.**