

SERMON FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY 2020
JOHN 13: 13-15
FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

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.

In the name of Jesus:

WWJD. What would Jesus do? Do you remember WWJD? The letters became popular back in the 1990's when Christians would wear yellow WWJD wristbands around their wrists in order to remind them to demonstrate the love of Jesus in their lives.

Perhaps it would be good for us to ask another question tonight, a question that could be shortened to the letters WDJJ, or what did Jesus do? Certainly this is an appropriate question for us in this Holy Season of Lent and in this celebration of Maundy Thursday.

In the Gospel of John, we see Jesus doing something quite strange. I will let John explain in the Gospel reading for today: "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." Now this was quite strange because as Jesus came to Simon Peter Simon then asked Jesus: "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."

Simon did not understand, and sadly, neither do we. Jesus is the Son of God in human flesh, He is the Name above all Names, and the Name at which every knee shall bow and every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord. Peter understood this fact and that is the reason why he has reservations when Jesus seeks to wash His feet. This is not how it is to work in the real world. If you are a King, then others serve you. If you want to be important, then you have other people do things for you. In a dog eat dog world, you fight to get on top and then you use any means to stay on top. Might makes right. Power means privilege. Jesus is on top. Why would He, why should He stoop down and wash the dirty stinking feet of His disciples? Why should Jesus take on the role of a servant, who would kneel down and wash the dirt and grime off of the feet of a houseguest? Why not let someone else do it? Someone other than Jesus.

But this is the way of Jesus. This is who Jesus is and this is what Jesus did and does. “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus came to this earth to serve. Jesus served the hungry by feeding them. He served the demon possessed by casting out the demonic and giving people new life. Jesus served those who grieved the death of loved ones by stating that He is the resurrection and the life. Jesus came to serve sinners, by giving His life unto death so that all who believe in Him will be saved. This is why Christ Jesus, who though he was in the Son of God, 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, and humbled Himself to die the death of a criminal on the cross. Jesus emptied Himself of His life so that He could give life to others.

Jesus gives you life today. The waters of Baptism have washed away your sins and the Holy Spirit has placed you in Christ. Christ’s life is now your life. Christ’s service has now become your service. Jesus serves you, just as He did His disciples, by giving Himself for you. He humbly comes to you to speak to you His Word of grace and life in the Holy Scriptures. He humbly comes to you in with and under the bread

and wine to empower you to live for Him. He humbly blesses you so that you know that you go in God's name and in His service, with His authority and power.

Jesus commissions His church, and you, to go and make disciples of all nations. He has full authority to do this. He authorizes you to go in His name, but not as some might exercise authority today. Those who have been given power or authority in the business world many times like to place orders, direct things and tell people under them what to do and how to do it. If they fail in meeting the expectations of the one in authority, they risk being punished or even losing their position in the organization. But Jesus doesn't exercise this authority with us and He doesn't give us the authority to do this to others. Just listen to how Jesus explains the type and nature of His authority to His disciples:

"²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant." (Matthew 20).

Jesus gives you and I His authority to act in His place and do His work as His servants. This is what He is teaching His disciples when He washes their feet. Just as Jesus humbled Himself and set aside His will

to help and serve you, so Jesus authorizes you to humble yourself and serve others.

This is why Jesus has said; “As the Father has sent Me so I send you. “ You are sent as Jesus’ servant. You are sent not as someone who is to be glorified or served, but you are sent to glorify Jesus in how you live your life for others. And in doing so, you are showing your love for God and showing love for your neighbor, as you would have others show love for you.

Sometimes it is so simple to show love to someone else and to serve in the name of Jesus. During this Pandemic, we all are to practice social distancing, and in doing so we obey God, obey those in government who are placed as God’s representatives over us, and we show love to our neighbor so that in keeping a safe distance we protect the health of others. We show love and serve others in how we shop, not hoarding and being greedy like some are doing, but only shopping for what we need, and then sharing with those in need from the blessings that God has given to us. We serve Jesus and serve others when we go to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to take care of our family, our church, our nation, our world, and us. We go before God’s throne of grace as His servants, interceding for the needs of those who have been

affected by this virus, and in doing we help others for God hears and answers our prayers for the sake of His Son Jesus.

In doing this, we do what Jesus has done. We show our love for God by reaching out and showing our love for neighbor. Maundy Thursday is the day we celebrate Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper. But did you realize that the name Maundy has little to do with the Sacrament? Maundy comes from the word maunds, which is an offering to and for the poor among us. Maundy Thursday has traditionally been a time in some congregations when, remembering how Jesus served his disciples by washing their feet, we now as His disciples serve others by giving to those in need. After all, that is what Jesus has done for us, He saw us in our need and had mercy on us, so that we can look to others and seek to meet their needs as God gives us the opportunity. Just as Jesus says: "15 for I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you."

Amen