

GOSPEL MESSAGE

April 6, 2023

MAUNDY THURSDAY

It's All about Love

On the night before he is killed, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment: to love one another as he has loved them. Before Jesus speaks these words, he shows the disciples what this love looks like and feels like. With a basin and a towel, he bends down and kneels before them, one by one. Stooping low, he cradles their dirty, smelly feet in his hands, washing them with tenderness and care.

Jesus does all this knowing what is to come—he will soon be betrayed, be killed, and rise again. Knowing that the disciples will be shaken to the core as they enter the valley of the shadow of death, Jesus chooses to take the time to silently care for them.

Tonight we are reminded that the love of Christ is the lifeblood of Christian community. We lovingly and vulnerably step into these ritual practices of serving one another in the ways that Jesus taught us on the night when he was betrayed. We wash one another's feet, and we serve one another the bread and wine of holy communion. In our awkwardness and care, in our washing and eating, in our giving and receiving, we can trust that God's grace flows among and through us. We are united as one body, sharing in the servant way of Jesus.

Christian community isn't defined by how great our programs are, how thoughtful our worship is, the brilliance of our preaching, or the quality of our music. All of these things are valuable, to be sure, insofar as they put us in touch with the unconditional love of God and inspire, encourage, and strengthen our will to love each other as Jesus loves us. As we walk through the valleys of the shadow of death in our lives and in the life of our world, we can hold on to what Jesus shows and teaches us on this night: it's all about love.

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