

Love one another as I have loved you.

Bible reference: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

On Sunday last, we heard the contrasts of voices of the crowds on Palm -Passion Sunday compared to the voices of the crowds who would shout “crucify him” so quickly afterward. As we move into these most holy days, we have and we face stark contrasts. The voices of the cheering, worshipful crowds with the voices of those on the night of his betrayal.

The contrasts continue and are sharper and more confronting tonight as the cross draws even closer.

There is a meal. It is a meal of celebration and invitation and inclusion...It is a meal of grace. It is God's meal for sinners. The Pharisees derided, criticised, mocked Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners. And here Jesus on the night of his betrayal institutes a heavenly meal for sinners like you and me. Come to the banquet God says in love in the shadow of the cross looming. And this contrasts so markedly with the reaction of the disciples: betrayal in the upper room; denial in the courtyard; violence in the garden!! Fleeing in fear the face of opposition.

Washing the weary traveller's feet: Jesus bends down, God comes down to be among people yes even us who like the disciples of that night betray their Lord by word and action. Again this night like Christmas Eve is enacted in the same humble yet profound way. God here for people...Immanuel, God here with and for you and me and serves the weary by washing the feet...the same feet which will flee in the garden at the first hurdle. And how I can relate to these feet, connected to hearts and voices “never Lord would I leave you...never Lord would I deny you...never Lord would I sleep while you prayed...never Lord would I run the other way from you.

Through Lent we've been travelling with Jesus on the way of the cross. Together we raised our voices on Palm Sunday. Yet how I can relate in the times I've been just like the disciples and their voices and their feet. The cross is near...will I pick up my cross and follow in the hard yards?!

And Jesus knows. He knows what lies ahead. He knows Peter's heart. He knows the disciples' faith....even so weak and he even knows Judas' betraying heart. And he comes among them full of grace and truth as he did that first Christmas...he comes among them and is with them and for them even and especially in the dirt and muck of the stable and the dirt and the muck of worldly power for power for power's sake, of worldly greed, of worldly sin, worldly exclusion and even for me. He comes among the people and makes the meal of forgiveness accessible to such as these and for all. He invites me, even me and you and us

and everyone to come for he makes all things...all things ready, all things possible. At Christmas we come to a holy place...a silent night, a holy night, a gift for life in the gift who is life.

And he comes and invites and not only feeds you and me for the journey but he knows your struggles, your weariness and your weakness and he bends down in love to wash your feet and mine.

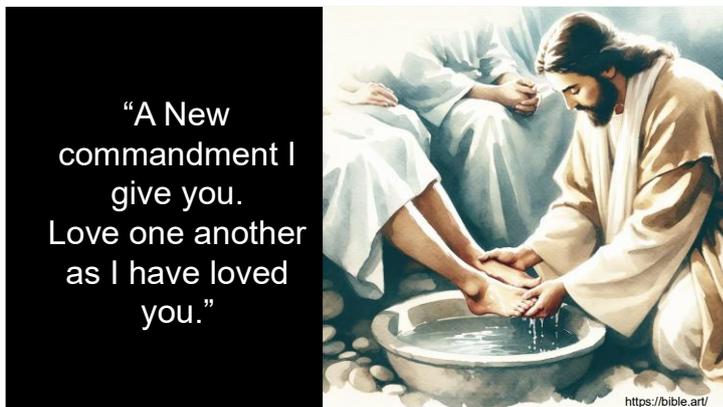
“ A new commandment I give you. Love one another. Love one another as I have loved you. And Jesus bends down in love and serves his beloved ones. Tonight we have opportunity to reflect on the love of God for us as God who made all things, bends down to love us as a humble servant.

A key focus of Maundy (Maundy coming from the Latin “Mandatum” which means command) Thursday is Christ’s new commandment for you and me who he has washed clean to love one another by learning to bend down and serve others as Christ has loved us.

Tonight we are about to conduct a rite of foot washing. A small group of people have been asked to come forward as representatives of our community of faith.

As you observe the rite, you may wish to meditate on Jesus’ words on the screen “A new commandment I give to you. Love one another as I have loved you.”

This act of foot washing symbolizes the gift of Christ’s love for us and his commandment to you and me to also love one another as he has loved us.



Jesus will invite us all to his table of grace and love. He will serve us and love us to the end with the gift of his body and blood. Later we will strip the altar as we reflect on the depth of Christ serving us and as true God emptying himself and taking on the form of slave in giving his life for you and for me on the

cross. He knows our sin, our struggles and our needs. He washes us clean and feeds us the meal of love.

And he sends us into the night and into our life every day to do the same....Love one another as I have loved you and by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul’s Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>