

# *Sermon: Maundy Thursday*

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Year C

Exodus 12:1-14

Psalms 116:1-2, 12-19

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Be on your guard... get ready to go... have a suitcase packed... put an extra blanket in the trunk... and a snow shovel just in case... I mean you never know... and while you're at it... bring some clean underwear... who knows how long you'll be gone... fill up the gas tank... and the camel... so you don't run low... on the highway... or in the desert... make sure you've eaten before you leave too... just so you don't have to stop and eat that fast food... it's not kosher anyway... who knows who washes their hands anymore...

But before you go... put some of the blood from last night's meal on the doorposts and lintel of your house... don't forget... really don't forget... that way... when I come to destroy the gods of Egypt... the things they put before me... the things they think they deserve... the things they lord over you... I'll be able to protect you... I'll pass over you... after all... I made you for myself... then you'll be able to make the journey... the sometimes difficult journey... from slavery to freedom...

Oh... some of you will regret having left... some of you will think you had it better in Egypt... you'll think the flesh-pots are better than the manna I'll give you... you'll think Egypt is better than what I have in mind for you... where I'm taking you... but when you can't see where you are... you can't see where you might go... so trust me... when the windows are dirty and you don't have any glass cleaner... you think that what you're seeing outside is as clear as it gets... when you can see only through a mirror dimly... you can't know how bright things can be... when you think you've already reached the zenith for which you were created... why would you want to try any harder... or reach any higher...

I don't think we've really begun to fully appreciate the Exodus story... I don't think we have a frame of reference yet for the hope it promises... for the promise it holds... it's not only about the end of four hundred years of slavery... not only about the way African American slaves saw it at the end of the Civil War... but it's about being freed from anything and everything that imprisons or keeps us in bondage... being freed from anything and everything that holds us back and prevents us from becoming and being the people God created us to be... it's about being freed not just from the tyranny of our own personalities... but from the tyranny anyone else tries to exert over us... it's about being freed from the unconscious and sometimes trance-like family of origin issues we've inherited and can't even see... and it's being freed from the idolatrous notion that allows us to make someone else wrong... so we can feel right...

We look to the past and see where we were then... and look at where we are now... but it's so difficult to imagine or see the more... it's like a goldfish in a bowl seeing the bathtub and thinking *I'll have it made if I can just get over there*... but it has no idea there's a river outside... and we can't conceive... the limitless ocean... of God's forgiveness... and healing... and abundance... and love...

Two thousand years ago... Simon Peter said... *You will never wash my feet*...

Last week... the Episcopal House of Bishops released A Word to the Church... [it's on the bulletin board down the hall]... they wrote: in this moment... we resemble God's children wandering in the wilderness... we... like they... are struggling to find our way... they turned from following God and worshiped a golden calf constructed from their own wealth... the current rhetoric is leading us to construct a modern false idol out of power and privilege... and we reject the idolatrous notion that we can ensure the safety of some by sacrificing the hopes of others...

I think some of those hopes include the hope of freedom... the hope of equality... the hope of equity... and the hope of finishing the journey at home...

And Jesus answered... *unless I wash you... you have no share with me...*

You see... Peter would have been familiar with this modern false idol of power and privilege... because it's what he knew then... and what Jesus was saying was... unless you're willing to accept that I'm no better than you... and you're no worse than me... unless you help me undo this ancient false idol of power and privilege... unless you understand that the world has it wrong and see that it is not of my Father..... then you have no share with me...

And Peter said to him... *Lord, not my feet only... but my hands and my head also...*

This is how God serves us... by preparing the way from slavery to freedom... this is how God bends down... not to be served but to serve... this is how Jesus stoops down... to wash our feet... and when the incarnate God does this... there's nothing we can tell ourselves anymore about how unworthy we are... when the incarnate God washes our feet... he also washes away our self-doubt... he washes away words like *not good enough... not thin enough... not pretty enough... not rich enough...* he washes away our attachment to the past... to the belief that we can never change... he gives us a new mandate... *I have set an example for you... that you also should do as I have done to you...*

I ask you to consider... how this action of washing feet... is like a sacrament... an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace... because it's not just about the outer act of washing feet... but about the change that takes place within us when we do... because inherent in it... is a rejection of the false idols of power and privilege... the love of being served... and the fear of our own unworthiness...

But there is no expectation tonight... only invitation... we are only being invited... and it's not rude to say no... not being ready... not feeling ready... is not rude...

But just offering it here... just considering it now... challenges the power structures all around us... and so little by little... we die to the *not good enough's*... and little by little... are re-born to crystal clear windows that let all of God's love shine through...

In two days it will be Holy Saturday... Holy Saturday is a day of rest... it's the seventh day on which God rested... as a culture... we don't like to rest... resting implies waiting... and we don't like to wait either... it gets harder and harder to make a case for how collectively patient we are... but on Holy Saturday... Jesus rested... he embodied Ps. 46:10... he rested in death...

As tonight's lesson from Exodus recounts the Israelite's final meal before their journey to embrace freedom... so the Last Supper recounts Jesus' final meal before his journey to embrace freedom from death... everything he had done up until then had been good... very good... he finished his work... he finished his ministry... even on the cross he said: *It is finished*... and now he rested... and the whole purpose of freedom from slavery... is to rest... taskmasters don't want you to rest... when you rest... you're not doing the work they want you to do... when you rest... you challenge the idols of privilege that Peter embraced... at least at first... when we rest... we can't be engaged in the addictions that keep us from facing our own issues... but when we rest... we can re-connect with the silence that is God...

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton wrote: the day between Good Friday and Easter can be seen as empty... a void... something to be resisted at all costs... something to be filled... it's the same reaction that many in our culture have to silence... it's as if sound and activity prove we still exist... but I think the space between crucifixion and resurrection... truly terrifying and truly compassionate... beckons us from our life to life in Christ... after all... it wasn't all the noise and fireworks that got Elijah's attention... but the sound of sheer silence...

And let's face it... this resting-in-God-thing isn't easy... but when we do this... and when we reject the false idols of power... and when we accept Jesus' mandate to serve each other... we move from the slavery of the world... to the freedom for which God has created us...

Tonight... we remember the Passover of our ancestors... but our Exodus journeys to servanthood... begin now...

Mike+