

Sermon: Now that You Know
Scripture: John 13:1-7, 12-17, 34-35
Maundy Thursday
Christian Ko Choi
Westminster Presbyterian Church
Springfield, Illinois

Our Scripture reading comes from the gospel of John, chapter 13. It reminds us of the last supper that Jesus shared with his disciples and the profound act of love and service that Jesus demonstrated. It is a retelling of a story when Jesus showed humility and grace in the darkest hour. Hear now, the Word of the Lord on this solemn night.

John 13:1-7, 12-17, 34-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him.

And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

*When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **Now that you know** these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Let us pray. Holy God, we thank you for the humility and grace you have displayed for all to see in your darkest hour. As you have pleaded with us to love one another, may we be encouraged and live out who you call us to be. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

I always thought that the song title, Silent Night Holy Night, one of Christmas classics is more applicable for Maundy Thursday, for it is one Holy Night of Sacraments – the ministry of Christ unfolding before us in the serving of the first Holy Communion through the sharing of the Passover feast and the act of Holy Baptism by washing the feet of his disciples, which gets overlooked by other days often. Yes, it is true that it is hard to highlight it over Easter when it is only a few days away.

As we come near the end of the season of Lent, Maundy Thursday represents a pinnacle point of Christ's ministry. This radical and humble act was displayed for all disciples – the twelve that were

with him that night and the current day disciples, you and me – so that we may live to a new calling, not to be kept hostage of the past but to live out a new calling: to love one another.

We talk about the price of our salvation often – that Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins; the Christ – the perfect and pure lamb has died on our behalf on the cross. What we usually don't explicitly include in that statement is that the Son of God, the one who possessed all power and authority, not only came to us in a human form, but went even lower, knelt down and washed the feet of his disciples. The one whom we praise King of kings and Lord of Lords performed an act of service that was reserved for the lowliest of servants of that biblical time. The humility that was shown on the night of the Last Supper is an act of humility that is an example for us to follow. Rather than taking today's Scripture to simply serve as reminders of the past of Christ's actions, what must we think about this very evening is how can we and would we relate that message to our own lives, our very own time, and be imaginative and creative to think what would that look like?

It is important to know and understand the Passover story, the story of God's faithfulness to the Israelites in Egypt that prompt the exodus and the journey to the promise land, which gives us the insight and reminder to all of us that we too are unforgettable to God, that God deeply cares of the things that transpires in our lives, and that God is the liberator of many things in our lives. Yet, this very Holy Night, God is dousing us with double dose of Sacraments, which is not meant to be simply to "remember," but to stir within us something that is more radical. The word, Maundy, comes from Latin, Mandatum, which the modern word, *mandate*, is derived from. When Simon Peter and his colleagues couldn't understand and directly asked Jesus what this all these things meant, the examples that Jesus laid before them, Jesus said according to the Scriptures,

*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **Now that you know** these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

*"A new command I give you: **Love one another.** As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (emphasis mine)*

This radical love that Jesus demonstrated was not a shallow or superficial love. It was not based on what the disciples could do for him, or on their performances, or on their social status. It was a sacrificial love, a love that was willing to lay down one's life for the sake of others. This is the kind of love that Jesus is calling us all of us to live – a love that is willing to serve, a love that is willing to sacrifice, and a love that is to give of ourselves for the sake of others.

Now that we know this commandment and its value of Christ's humility and perfect love that were demonstrated, how are we to live it out? How will we demonstrate this kind of sacrificial love to those around us and around the world? What must we do so that what Jesus words becomes reality? "By this everyone will know that you [and I] are [Jesus'] disciples, [that you and I do truly] love one another?"

Therefore friends, let this silent night, holy night begin in us a seedling in our hearts and minds to think deeply of our baptismal journey ahead of us, how we must transform our lives to reflect Christ's humility and sacrificial love by giving of ourselves for the sake of others. And let us not forget to recall that God never forgets us, that we are never alone, and we have the capacity to love and be a source of blessing to others because of God's Holy Spirit that is working around us, that dwells within us, and works through us in everything that we say, and we do. So let us do it daringly and courageously. In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit. Amen.