

St. Bride's Church of Scotland, Newtonmore

Rev. Catherine Buchan

Maundy Thursday 28th March 2013

Hymn 376 Twas on that night, when doomed to know

Luke 22:14-27

We gather in Christ's name and at his invitation. All who love him are members of his family and all the family is welcome at the table.

Read John 15:1-17 (part of the last Supper discourse)

Jesus loved us to the end, loved us with the greatest love that one can show another: loved us literally to death and through death.

Let us pray:

Give thanks for Jesus' invitation, and his death and resurrection to redeem us.
Pledge ourselves to live in his way of self-giving love.

Jesus took bread and broke it (do so) and gave it to his friends saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

He took the cup after supper and said "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, grant us peace

Pass elements around.

Thanks to you, Lord God our Father, Christ our redeemer and Spirit our helper, that you have allowed us to gather once more round your table to eat and drink in fellowship with you and with one another. Send us out to live in your name and by your strength. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

Hymn 357 This is my will, my new command

Then move to the chancel.

Read John 13:1-17.

Basin and towel. Wash feet or hands. Do it for our neighbours, because Jesus said we should wash each other's feet.

Hymn 372 Lord Jesus, as the shadows long are stealing

Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet. It was not a fit job for any leader, far less for a Messiah, for the Son of God. It was the job of the slave, or of the least important person present - maybe the youngest. Perhaps that is why John records this happening when no one else does. There is a tradition that he was the youngest of the disciples (because he lived for a long time) so maybe when Jesus took the basin and towels- which must have been there, which everyone must have ignored, nor tried not to notice - John felt especially guilty, because he knew that in most companies it would have been his menial task.

Peter did not think it a fit job for Jesus. None of the disciples thought it a fit job for themselves. But Jesus knew it was a job that should be done, not was something that would bring comfort and refreshment, and if he could bring comfort and refreshment, he would. Peter did not want his feet washed. But which was worst, that Jesus should wash his feet, or that Jesus should go to his torture and death on Calvary for him? Later in his life, when Peter realised that Calvary was also something Jesus did for him, something far greater and far worse than washing feet, I wonder how he felt?

And how did you feel at the idea of someone washing your feet? Or at the idea of washing someone else's feet? Did you want your feet washed? If not really, why not? Are they ugly? Might they be smelly? Are they hard to access?

So should they not be washed? Are feet private? They may be tender or ticklish. Jesus said that he was going to do the jobs that needed done. That no one else would or could do. He talked of making his friends clean. He meant clean inside as well as outside.

So how about your inner self? How about your soul? Is it fit to be looked at by your neighbour? Is it smelly, ugly or difficult to access? It was to cleanse you that Jesus gave us the witness of the upper room, which points forward to the witness of Calvary. Maybe you think that your inner being is not worth saving, cleansing, dying for. But Jesus washed all of the disciples feet. He even washed the feet of Judas, although he knew who it was who would betray him. He loved them. As John said, he loved them to the end. And he loves you that way as well.

Jesus washed feet, because there was a job which needed doing and he could do it. He never thought that any act of love, anything which would make life better for someone, momentarily or eternally, was not a fit job for him. He washed their feet and then he set out on the road which would lead to his death. Jesus did what needed done. It doesn't mean that he liked doing these things, but he did them.

We are his servants, and the servant is not greater than his master.

Prayer

Your servants, your children, your disciples, your friends, Lord we bow before you.

You have served us with basin and towel, with bread and wine.
You have served us with yourself, pouring all that you are into our form, into a life like ours. You have served us with your life of love and compassion, and with your faithfulness to God at all costs. We bow before you, because there is part of us that dare not look up to you: the part of which we are ashamed, which we want to hide, from others, from ourselves, from you.
We bow before you because there are things which happened on the Thursday night so long ago, things which we have remembered here tonight, which we do not understand.
We bow before you because we are humbled and awed at your presence, at your love, at your faithfulness, at your total incarnation for our sakes.
Lord, we do not seek to be greater than you, our master. So teach us how to serve, even as you served, as you still serve us. Teach us to look for the good that we can do, and gladly spend ourselves doing it for your sake. Teach us to stay close to you, so that we may always have your presence and your example before us, helping us to know your will and giving us courage to do it.
We pray for your sake, Amen.

Hymn 374 From heaven you came, helpless babe