

Squamish United Church/St. John's Anglican Joint Service
Rev. Karen Millard
Maundy Thursday

April 9, 2020

“Blessed Maundy Thursday... God's invitation to "wash up before dinner.”

In a time where we are washing obsessively washing ones feet seems almost ridiculous and yet it is a practice of humility many of us embrace every year on this day. But tonight as we are unable to come together in a sacred ritual I invite us to sit back and take a new view of it all.

Imagine a God who doesn't demand your worship, mindless obedience, or tithes but actually serves you out of love, simply because that's who God is...

Imagine a God, so located within God's own identity that God isn't concerned what others would think, nor bows to societal, religious, or cultural pressures but is present to what is most real...

Imagine a God who takes the most holy day of your tradition(s) and through God's own presence throws open the table so that all are welcome, especially those who've been told in a thousand ways that they don't deserve a seat...

Imagine a God who dines with those riddled with doubt, or who think that God isn't revolutionary enough/or in the "right" ways, or who even deny or betray God...

Imagine a God who desires - even needs - real relationships, communing as the Godhead, and with friends...even if God's friends can't seem to stay awake...

Imagine a God who rejects violence enacted on God's behalf, healing the oppressor and inviting followers to put away their weapons...

Imagine a God who suffers...” (Dwight J. Friesen)

This Maundy Thursday night of ‘commandment’ is one of the deepest rituals of the year to find ourselves in far off rooms and houses on the night where we come to remember the deep community and humility of Jesus in the last feast he shares with his friends feels a bit obtuse. But the religious ritual is never the point, nor is the sacrament of the table of the last supper. Augustine defined a sacrament as ‘an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.’

Listen to Jesus’ words again. How do you respond?

"Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your

feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

This night shares with us the deep humility of Jesus. It was and is beautiful. Dorothy Sayers, borrowing Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*, wrote that Jesus had “a daily beauty that made us ugly.” We are so full of ourselves. Christ emptied himself, first in heaven (Philippians 2) and then on earth.

Maundy Thursday is not primarily about washing feet, though that is an important part of the story of Jesus' last Passover meal and a ritual I personally find humbling and healing. Yet this night is about a deeper humility: the gift of Christ's own body and blood. A meal made of love.

Eating his flesh and drinking his blood is a jarring image and yet it simply means he is giving his everything and we are taking it fully—his life into ours. We are feeding on him as though nothing else can fully satisfy. We are apart, but coming together in one eternal meal that unites all our diverse, but coordinated ugliness into the stark beauty of Jesus' life and love.

It *is* a threat. It's a threat to our pride, insecurity and our hopes in human achievement. Christ's beauty is a threat, but it is also a promise. It's the promise that if we will live on in him our ugliness will be swallowed up in his beauty and this will not be the last or only spiritual meal we eat together. In him and in his Meal, the beauty of the Kingdom becomes visible and tasteful in a world that is despairing and hard.

So I wonder knowing that we cannot come together in the same way as usual on this holy weekend how do we hear and live into Jesus' words. “Go and do likewise,” “do this in remembrance of me.” On this holy weekend I wonder where are we being called to humility, to grace, to hope and promise, where are we being asked to love beyond measure this day?

If we discover how to live into this new way of being, this new ritual of love I might be interested in experiencing that new kind of ritual and getting to know the God that you know.

On this holy night

May Christ who crouches to wash feet, wash over you.

May Christ who breaks bread and offers it as his body, feed you.

May Christ who offers the cup, quench your thirst with his steadfast love.

Amen

