

Maundy Thursday

Collect and Reading

God our Father, you have invited us to share in the supper which your Son gave to his Church to proclaim his death until he comes: may he nourish us by his presence, and unite us in his love; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

John 13.1-17,31b-35

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

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. I tell you the truth, 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.

"Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

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

Reflection

Hand washing is now the THING we do. Wash hands not only for hygiene but now we must wash to make ourselves safer - becoming a less welcoming host for the virus. At the first "last Supper" we see Jesus making the disciples, his family clean. Then feeding them, to make them strong and ready for all that lay ahead.

Then he reminded them of their job - to love. Love one another. He said this after Judas had left, but there is no indication that Judas was excluded from this commandment. Love one another. Love the friend, the one who is easy to love, the one who is close, the one who Jesus loves. But also love the betrayer, the one who hurts you, love the one who destroys goodness, love the one who chooses not to love. But love is not excusing someone or giving them free rein to hurt.

When a child or a puppy (!) acts badly you redirect them, you teach them what is right, and what is wrong. That is loving, not the punishment but the desire to help them be the best that they can be, even if it means they won't like you for a while. Loving someone is making sure that your redirecting is kind and appropriate, not cruel or unjust. Loving someone is believing in them to be lovable. Believing in a future for them. Believing that they are worth loving. Loving is tough stuff. It puts the needs of others first and it is costly because those who love will get hurt.

Jesus loved us. He loved God. He loved us so much that for our sake, for the forgiveness of our sins he gave up his life. For you. For me. For those it is easy to love and those it is not. For the saint and for the sinner. Jesus lived died and rose again for them all.

Prayers

We pray for the world, for our community, for our church, for our family and friends, and for ourselves in our own words, concluding with:

Make your ways known upon earth, Lord God,
your saving power among all peoples.

Renew your Church in holiness
and help us to serve you with joy.

Guide the leaders of this and every nation,
that justice may prevail throughout the world.

Let not the needy be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Make us instruments of your peace
and let your glory be over all the earth. Amen.

The Coming by RS Thomas

And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look he said.
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce
Colour. The light burned
There; crusted buildings
Cast their shadows: a bright
Serpent, a river
Uncoiled itself, radiant
With slime.

On a bare
Hill a bare tree saddened
The sky. Many People
Held out their thin arms
To it, as though waiting
For a vanished April
To return to its crossed
Boughs. The son watched
Them. Let me go there, he said.