

Maundy Thursday  
Sermon Text: John 3:1-17, 31b-35  
Date Preached: April 1, 2010

Lord whose love in humble service bore the weight of human need. Stir us to ardent service following the example of Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Before Jesus gave the command to love your neighbor as yourself, he demonstrated what that love would look like. He got up from the table. Jesus became a humble servant. He washed the disciples' feet.

Such act of service is a touchy one, pun intended. Consider the reality that many of us today wear shoes and socks. We shelter them from the prickliness of the ground, the shooting pain of stepping on a pebble, and the inevitable stubbing of the toe. We tend to hide the calluses, corns, ingrown toe nails that have logged thousands of miles over the course of our lives. Not only do we protect our feet in such a way, but we also do so in some cases to shelter our noses from the less than pleasant aroma.

Such service is touchy beyond the literal act of washing feet. Metaphorically speaking this humble act plunges us into the harsh realities of life, full of imperfections and needs. This is the point Jesus is

making. A life of loving service will lead us into the unpleasantness that is life.

But before Jesus sends the disciples out for service, Jesus serves. Jesus serves them and us with his loving grace. He touches those dirty, smelly aspects of our lives that we ourselves don't wish to acknowledge. Once we have been served then are equipped to serve. Such will be the natural outflow of being disciples.

In other words, served people, serve people. Receiving leads to action. But receiving itself is hard.

When we are first born being served is easy. We don't know any different. We are limited in many ways in how we can serve. But when we grow up we tend to shift our thinking on how to serve.

We want to do things on our own. We want to be self sufficient. We certainly don't want to be like the individuals that we can think of who try to get through life on nothing but handouts. Unfortunately, such occurrences cast a shroud over the value of being served. Yet, throughout our life, there is a time for us regardless of our age to be served.

Tonight is one such night. Tonight reminds us that Jesus came into this world to serve, to literally give himself away for the life of the world. That is exactly what he did.

Jesus' life of service is one of laying down his life. It is an act of love. His death embodies mercy. We are the recipients of his mercy, without which we have no share in Christ. That was what he meant in response to Peter's objection about having his feet washed.

Being served in this way is crucial, for it provides us the spiritual ability to go out in loving service to our neighbor. For that is what Christ is bidding us to do.

Consider some of the ways we as a congregation serve. We plant, water, and harvest in the dirt of the hunger garden to provide food that is distributed through the Westmoreland County food bank. We serve companionship with the elderly through visits. We serve comfort to the grieving by attending viewings and funerals, as well as through our Take Heart ministry.

We serve our time and effort into areas of the world torn asunder by natural disaster through the volunteers from our church and our synod who have

traveled to the Gulf coast. Such service includes our youth who traveled to New Orleans for the National Youth Gathering.

All these and other acts of service lead us to confront the brokenness that is a reality for many people. Jesus is setting before his disciples then and now this example.

We are a served people. We are served with qualities of faith, hope and love. We are served with Jesus himself in, with and under the elements of bread and wine. Dillon, Andrew, Brooke, Michael, Tabitha, Kaiman, Dylan, Johnathan, Nicole, you join us at the table of our Lord to be served with Christ's body and blood.

Jesus Christ, whom you receive at this table today and frequently throughout your life, bids us to go to those unpleasant areas of life. For that is where Christ wants to be present. When you go, you carry with you the presence of God.

We are among the many people of God served by our Lord. Served people, serve people. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." AMEN.