

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

On Maundy Thursday I am always struck by the Lord's gracious humility,
by the deep love and compassion he expressed toward his disciples,
and what an incredible & powerful experience that must have been.

I read recently about a very courageous & compassionate young mother,
who was terminal, and wanted to prepare her children for her death,
who were too young to understand all that she needed to say.

She wanted to pass along to them her abiding love, faith and values,
and wanted to share with them her delight and hope, her joy in life.

And she struggled to find a meaningful and appropriate way
that she could communicate her great & enduring affection for them,
someway to help them remember her stories of their time together
of all, always to know the depth of her love for them. and most

So she wrote letters to them, letters to be opened after she died,
at the next Christmas, their graduation, their wedding, & so on.

She also made several tapes of herself simply speaking to them,
singing to them, telling jokes, reading stories and poetry,
and final lessons of what she didn't want them to ever forget.

She wanted to show them that she would love them always and forever,
knowing that her death was certain & rapidly approaching,
and in order to speak beyond the limitations of mere words,
she chose one evening to lovingly bath them,
and sat them down to a special meal she had prepared for them.

There she held them close & talked about her love & hopes for them.
She used the seemingly mundane, the familiar & ordinary of that meal
to show her dear children how very much she loved and cared for them.

Facing his own death and departure, Jesus wanted his disciples
to feel his gracious love & remember that great truth forever, vs. 1,

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.

For three years Jesus taught them, he had told them lots of stories.

At then at the end, washing their feet, he bathed them,
and he shared that special meal together with them---

- ordinary bread and wine which become sacramental elements.
- He held them close and talked with them about his love.

Like that courageous and caring mother,

Jesus used a seemingly mundane and familiar meal together,
as there in the Upper Room, he made known to them,
how very much he loved and cherished them,
and wanted them to always remember that night.

What an odd meal that must have been.

What a strange conversation they must have had that night.

They were sitting together, preparing to celebrate Passover,
then Jesus tells them about the bread being his body broken
and about the wine becoming a new covenant in his blood.

What a strangely ironic and poignant night that was ---

that despite all his lessons & parables about humility & service,
still the disciples came in jostling for position, status & honor.

They did not even pause to wash their feet, much less each other's,
which was an absolute minimal courtesy in that place and culture.

But rather, as we heard read from [Luke 22:24-27](#)

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as
the greatest. But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and
those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you;
rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one
who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it
not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Then in the passage from John 13,

we read about Jesus himself washing their dirty filthy feet.

It was a critical object lesson about humility and service,
but far more significantly, it was an expression of his love.

Fully aware of what was to be in the hours ahead,

¹Jesus washed the feet of Judas, who would shortly betray him,

²the feet of Peter, who would deny even knowing him 3 times,

³and the rest of the disciples who would use those feet

to flee in disloyalty & fear, abandoning their Lord,

just when Jesus needed their friendship and support most.

The lesson to be learned is the awesome depth of God's amazing love

even for those who betray, deny, flee in disloyal fear and abandon.

Suppose that for tonight, Jesus was physically standing right here

What do you think, what do you suppose he would say to you?

What would Jesus have to say about your life,

and about the things you thought, done and said?

Sometimes, when I think about God's holiness and grace toward me,

I feel overwhelmed with sorrow and guilt, shame and regret,

because I haven't always been faithful & obedient to God's will...

...and my guilt can swirl into destructive & debilitating fear & shame

that assumes Jesus must be terribly angry and disappointed in me.

And at times

don't we all hear those echoing voices accusation & condemnation

knowing that we don't measure up to God's wise & holy standards,

nor have we accomplished all the good that we probably could.

But those voices and feelings of fear & shame are not coming from God.

There is a critical distinction and enormously vast difference

between the voice of conscience as warning against sin,

and a debilitating sense of shame, hopeless defeat and fear,

as if any failure or sin were somehow beyond the grace of God.

The disciples were not worthy of that meal with Jesus,
much less having their filthy feet washed by the Lord,
yet Jesus never gave up on them or rejected them,
and neither will he give up on or reject any of us.

Jesus continued to love them and to guide his disciples,
and in fact, through them, Jesus did accomplish his mission,
just as God is continuing to accomplish through us, the Church.

God's gracious love and mercy are infinitely beyond
any reasonable expectation or rational explanation.

And is most vividly revealed and demonstrated by Jesus our Lord,
who left the perfection and purity of holy heaven
to enter the horror of our sin-infected corrupt world,
and let himself be wounded and broken for our sake.

God's grace means that we are truly loved, blessed and valued,
not because we are good or worthy, or in any way deserving,
but simply because God decided to love and show mercy,
as so powerfully demonstrated by that Upper Room meal.

The wonderful language of love was most clearly spoken that night.
In answer to disciples foolishly jostling for primacy & power,
we see Jesus washing the feet of even the betrayer,
the 3-time denier and those who would later abandon.

We see Jesus sitting down at the Table with those disloyal & doubting,
as common foods are given a new sacramental significance,
as signs of the infinite mystery of God's infinite love.

So how can we know for sure the truth of God's abiding love for us?

We read: 1 John 4:12-13,16

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

How can we be assured that we abide in God and in God's love?
How can we know that God's Spirit is at work in our lives,
and that we are included in the hope and promises of God?

We know because,
when God's Holy Spirit dwells in us and lives in our hearts
it will be reflected by our desire to love and serve others,
and to follow the example that Jesus has placed before us.

As he explained that night, John 13:14-15, 17

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. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

This is how do we respond to a God whose love is so overwhelming,
and love that is so far beyond our understanding or expectations.

**For the authenticity of God's presence and love in our lives,
is reflected by our own love & compassion toward other people.**

If we truly have received God's love, then we are being transformed,
as we respond to the love that we ourselves have received
by loving those others, whom God sends for us to serve,
for it's in our loving others that we know we are loved.

Therefore, coming to the Lord's Table tonight,

consider the command and mandate of Maundy Thursday: John 13:33~35

Little children, I am with you only a little longer. ... 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ... I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."