

Maundy Thursday, April 1, 2021
The Rev. Dr. Kyle Wagner
Rector, Christ Church, Dartmouth

Open our ears, O Lord,
to hear your word and know your voice.
Speak to our hearts and strengthen our wills,
that we may serve you today and always. Amen

There is a story of a small boy who consistently came home late from school. His parents warned him that he must be home on time that afternoon, but nevertheless he arrived later than ever. His mother met him at the door and said nothing. His father met him in the living room and said nothing.

At dinner that night, the boy looked at his plate. There was a slice of bread and a glass of water. He looked at his father's full plate and then at his father, but his father remained silent. The boy was crushed.

The father waited for the full impact to sink in, then quietly he took the boy's plate and placed it in front of himself. He took his own plate of meat and potatoes, put it in front of the boy, and smiled at his son.

When the boy grew to be a man, he said, "All my life I've known what God is like by what my father did that night."

My friends, God does feed us, and tonight we truly experience this. On this Maundy Thursday, our Lenten observance comes to an end.

We gather to celebrate the Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection, the Tridium as it is often called. This evening, we recognize Christ's last meal with his disciples, a meal that sees Judas betraying him.

I believe our central focus this evening is what comes from this meal. The question is: What are we going to do when we experience the fullness of this meal? What is like to be a Christian and to acknowledge the intimate act of Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

It's sometimes hard to be humble in 2021, given all the crap we've had to deal with this last year.

The world today seems superficial. It's prejudicial, and so we live in a place where we have too many vigils. We want to be wishful, but it feels artificial. We need to be more beneficial, and sacrificial in what we do. Perhaps I could put it better. You may remember Mac Davis' song:

Oh Lord it's hard to be humble
When you're perfect in every way
I can't wait to look in the mirror

Cause I get better looking each day

Oh Lord it is hard to be humble. But tonight, we are reminded that we are called to be humble and to give and receive love in service to each another.

This evening we are transformed, at the Last Supper, transformed by HIS grace and mercy. And it is this transformative experience that we as Christians are to share with the world! Understanding what it means to be a fool for Christ, having a heart for Jesus is what we are all about this evening.

So what are we learning this evening. Well, with the washing of the disciples feet, Jesus gives us a blueprint for life. With the washing, our Lord does two things.

First, Jesus asks us to do whatever it takes to help someone when called upon. I'm here this evening to tell you that on your Christian journey God has, or will place you in certain moments or times, where you will be the only person who can best help, or minister to someone else. You may not believe it, but God has gifted you and you will be called to act, because no one can do it better. I don't know what your experience will look like, but you may have to get your hands dirty, and you may need to get low.

The second thing I take from Jesus commandment is that we also need to allow people to serve us when we are in need. There will be a time when you will need someone to serve you, serving to help you in sickness and in health. I look back as my father's health when it was low. Dad passed away due to Multiple Scleroses.

As things grew worse, my mother and I had to care for him 24/7. We had to do things we didn't want to do. We had to get low and dirty, literally.

When we get low and dirty, Jesus encourages us to be humble. Because there will be times when we will want someone to get low and dirty for us. Times' when we feel so depressed or defeated that we just can't seem to cope, times when we feel like a slob!

I remember Joan Osborne's song *One of Us*. I think I was in grade seven when it first came out? The song asks us to consider our relationship with God.

If God had a name what would it be?

And would you call it to his face?

If you were faced with Him in all His glory

What would you ask if you had just one question?

What if God was one of us?

Just a slob like one of us

Just a stranger on the bus

Tryin' to make his way home?

What if God was one of us?
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Tryin' to make his way home?

We need to remember that from time to time we are slobs, and we are strangers. The question is what are we going to do about it? How can we be an instrument for God, how can we live out his great commandment to “love one another?”

Since my childhood I have long been fascinated with the Holy Grail. The grail is the stuff of legends. Its in the King Arthur stories, its that elusive object that is sought after. It's in Dan Brown's book *The Da Vinci Code*. I was so fascinated with the Holy Grail that I purchased a prop replica of it, from the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last crusades*. Years ago, I went to Glastonbury in Summerset England. It's the place that is associated with King Arthur's resting place in Avalon in the 12th century. The story says that the Holy Grail was brought to a specific well by Joseph of Arimathea. I went to the place; it's called the *Chalice Well*. It's a beautiful garden with a well which you can bottle the water.

But what is the grail? Like any cup, it is a vessel. It holds something. It hold's something for the person who drinks of it, or for the person who shares it. Jesus in his ministry poured himself out for his friends. And so, we are called to be vessels, instruments of God's love, for in John it describes Jesus saying, “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”
AMEN.