

Holy Thursday  
03/28/2013  
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
John 13:1-5  
David McMinn

I bring you grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Word of God for our consideration this evening is from the Gospel according to Saint John the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter.

“Jesus gathers with those He loves.” In the Gospel for tonight we see Him dining, fellowshiping with the Apostles. He gathers with them and with them He will celebrate the Passover meal. Together they would eat the meal that memorialized the act of God delivering the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. This deliverance was done through the blood of a male lamb sacrificed for the members of each household.

Jesus told the disciples before He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem that He was going to die there. They did not understand. The crowds that cheered Him on as He arrived in Jerusalem certainly didn't understand either. They thought their new earthly king had arrived. But later He'd say, “*My kingdom is not of this world.*”

So Jesus shares with the disciples His last meal before His crucifixion. He celebrates with them the Passover and He institutes His own supper. The Lamb who would shortly die for the sins of the apostles, for the cheering crowds and for us shares bread and Himself with those He'd spent His ministry with. “*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to*

*depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”*

Jesus, a human, God yes, yet a human, knows that His death is mere hours away. Shortly He'd be arrested and brought before Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas and Herod. He knew He was about to suffer for the sake of the world. A world that largely doesn't acknowledge Him. As these things weighed on His mind He thinks of what?

Before we answer that, ask yourself the same question. Your death is looming. Great agony awaits you. Is your mind on your enemies? Is your mind on those who despise you? Is your mind even on those you love with the exception of “how will they manage without me?” In times of crises and suffering spiritually or physically our thoughts are by and large on us. When we suffer in this world physically, emotionally or spiritually we find it very difficult to focus on anybody but us. After all it's our suffering. Surely our own suffering is unique. Surely our suffering is greater and worse and different than all suffering that has preceded it. It is after all our suffering.

Jesus' upcoming death and suffering is known to Him, it's coming for Him and He thinks about...His disciples. He thinks not of Himself, not the uniqueness of His suffering. No His thoughts are on His disciples. His thoughts are on those He loves. Jesus is about to die and He dons a towel and picks up a wash bowl and begins to wash the disciples' feet.

Peter gets the apparent impropriety of Jesus' actions and tries to stop Him. Peter refuses to have his feet washed and touched by Jesus. “Far be it for

the Christ to do so”, he thinks. Peter believes Jesus to be the Christ. He believes that Jesus was sent by God to be the world’s Savior. Jesus is a holy man and maybe even more He is a godly man. Washing feet is beneath Him. It’s amazing Peter thinks this way, considering he never seems to think that he’s being presumptuous by not allowing Jesus to do the work He came to do. His thinking was vain, centered on his own ideas.

If it’s beneath Jesus to wash Peter’s feet then what about the death Jesus must die. If Peter prevented Jesus from washing feet and dying how would Peter ever be washed clean from His sins? *“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around His waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around Him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to Him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” Peter said to Him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.””*

There’s no salvation apart from Christ washing us clean. There’s no salvation without Jesus shedding His blood. Apart this washing and Jesus’ death Peter had no share, no part with Christ. Unless He submitted to Christ’s cleansing Peter would be lost.

It’s no different today. Apart from Christ shedding His blood, apart from that cleansing flood being given to us in Word, Baptism and Supper we have no

salvation. We have no share in the things of Christ unless we receive Him as our Savior. If He doesn't clean us, we're not clean.

That the Son of God would humble Himself by washing feet and dying is beyond our comprehension. We believe that Jesus did what He did but we don't understand it. In your own vanity please don't pretend that you do. Our sinful nature isn't capable of computing such a thing. Our thinking is in vain.

Did you notice who is there at the Last Supper? It's the Apostles, yes, but the group includes Judas. Judas' feet are washed. Judas is evidently fed with the Lord's body and blood. Grace upon grace is poured out on all present. Jesus isn't just loving the ones who He knows will die in faith, He even loves him who will betray Him over to death. The love of Christ knows no bounds. His love extends to all of humanity, but humanity doesn't reciprocate. Too many ignore the love of Christ like Judas. Too many will not listen to His voice like Judas. Too many want to have things their own way and as they see fit, like Judas and even Peter. And "too many" includes you.

Jesus would have His way with us. He would have us hear His Word, receive faith, repent of our sins and live and die as His chosen people. It's why He shed His blood. But our nature like Peter's would have things differently. We would build a Savior and a salvation of our own design, fitting what seems proper to us. Jesus answers us, "*What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.*"

See in the end we can't believe on our own. We can certainly disbelieve on our own but we can't believe on our own. We can be like Judas and have

things our way to the very end and in that case we die apart from God's grace in Christ. It's all we're capable of doing, on our own. But God would not have it be so. Instead He continues to pour out His Word into your little ears that you might repent of your own ideas and faults and receive in place of those forgiveness, faith and salvation in Christ.

It's the Word of God that converts Peter and us. It's the shedding of the blood of Jesus that makes us worthy. It's Jesus washing us in Holy Baptism and feeding us in the Supper that gives us faith. In these things we're caused to despair of ourselves and our ideas and in place of those we receive a new nature in Christ. We're transformed into God's elect. We're brothers and sisters sharing in the grace of Christ.

Tonight, again, you're receiving the forgiveness of your sins and the strengthening of your faith. Tonight again God makes you His own as Christ gathers with those He loves. Amen.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.