

Rev. George Arceneaux

3.28.2024

Maundy Thursday Address

HEY EVERYBODY! Please feel free to continue eating as we get the more liturgical part of tonight underway, if you're curious about exactly where we are, we're at "A Brief Maundy Thursday Address", so you can start the clock on whether or not that "brief" word is accurate.

Tonight's is particularly weird and cool in the grand scheme of church services we do in a year. We blessed our bread and wine along with all this homemade soup and we've been chilling and eating this meal together which is meant, in its essence, to not be all that different from what we normally do on Sunday.

But the REASON why we do it this, well, Howie's gonna hook us up on that in our John reading in just a second. We spend time with one another as friends as Jesus did with *his* friends on the night before he died. He spent time with those he lived with, worked with, possibly partied with. He had a final night out before the climax of his story was to begin. We're mirroring what his disciples did and we will continue to mirror their story as we wash feet and head into the sanctuary before too long to bear witness to a world where Christ was dead.

First, we're going to do the foot washing and honor that commandment that Christ gave at the last supper, the mandatum, the Maundy, the mandate: Love others as I have loved you. For the record, foot washing is NOT required, but its meant to be a symbol of service we're all called to embody. While we're washing feet up here, I hope it reminds you what that symbol means. It means we're called to serve others as practically our world demands. It means holding the door open for a stranger, spending time with friends who are struggling, doing the dishes so your spouse doesn't have to, it's the stuff that isn't as miraculous and gigantic as death on a cross, its as common place and grungy as making sure you get the toe boogers out of someone's feet.

After we wrap with the foot washing, we'll follow the choir into the sanctuary and into that garden of gethsemane. We'll pray and grieve as the passion begins and strip the altar in what is one of the most powerful moments of our faith. We'll remove all signs of sanctity from our place of worship, and remember that Jesus was when he died, gone. There may be resurrection that happens but Jesus died. When the final light of Christ is snuffed out, the light that says the presence of Christ is gone, I'm going home. You can too. Or, if you'd like, you can live into the love and the human fallibility of the disciples and pray in silence in the chapel, where Wendy Norris has set up a Gethsemene Garden. If you're the last person when you leave, just make sure the door closes on the way out, we've got someone coming by late tonight to make sure we're locked up and good to go.

That's a lot of instruction, and I hope it helps you think about the power of tonight and the story of Jesus. But through all of the hubbub we do, remember that Jesus gave one command to follow as we go into the death and resurrection. It was not to do things the right way. It was not to be successful. It was not to make money or get popular or to be better than anybody else.

It was to love. In all the simple splendor of life in its goodness and hurt. Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, here we come. Howie, would you kindly lead us into this sacred night with the mandate Jesus gave us in John?