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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 29, 2018
Maundy Thursday

Scripture Lessons: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, Mark 14:12-126
Hymns: 142; 166; 164; 173

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 13:1-17

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

²And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray Him, ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

⁷Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

⁸Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

⁹Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!"

¹⁰Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

¹¹For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. ¹⁴ If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The Redeemer of the World!

Can one fathom the importance of that title. Sometimes in sports teams or individuals are called World Champions. In fact they are often only champions of a particular league, and they are champions for only as long as they can hold onto that championship. Maybe a year or two, if more than that the words “dynasty” and “legend” are tossed about as people talk about greatness. In matter of fact they aren’t champions in the full meaning, the classic meaning of the word. They maybe represent a city or a region, but not in mortal combat with people’s liberty or even lives at stake. No, sports fanatics only behave like there is something that great at stake. In fact it is only a game, and the champions are only “players” at a game. Nonetheless there is a great deal of pride associated with being the champions.

Now consider the Redeemer of the world. He came down from heaven, yes down from heaven to take on our flesh and blood to be our Champion in the fullest meaning of the word. Lives were on the line. His was to be sacrificed to save ours; to redeem us to God, and not only us but to pay for the sins of the whole world. Jesus was hailed as King, but His true greatness exceeded all human understanding. His greatness as Redeemer of the world will lead all men, ALL men, to bow before Him and every tongue to confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.--

Now, keeping this in mind let us with the Spirit's guidance consider:

THEME: The Redeemer of the World -- Humbled.

Jesus was humbled not by others, He was not humiliated, but humbled, willingly of His own accord.

Our text leads us to observe --

I. The Lowly Nature of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit repeatedly reminds us of Jesus' self-awareness. He knew who He was, where He had come from and that He was going to return to heaven. Jesus knew all that lay before Him in His sufferings and death. He knew that His time in this world was drawing to a close. He knew that this was the Last Passover Supper, the last time He would have this special time with His disciples. He felt a deep love for these, His disciples. Our text says, "having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." (v.1) These are the insights into the heart and mind of Jesus the Holy Spirit gives us leading up to the report of Jesus' action on this occasion. Again as the inspired writer reports that Jesus laid aside His garments and girded Himself with a towel, we are reminded again that Jesus understood that the Father had given all things into His hands. Jesus took that basin of water and started making His way around the table, kneeling at the end of each of the dining couches, washing the dirt and grime from the feet of these dearly loved friends. This was the task of the lowliest household servant, and yet Jesus took this task, this lowly task on Himself.

The disciples didn't understand the spiritual significance of what Jesus was doing. It was actually multifaceted. The point is made, that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, was willing to do this lowly task, doing what was necessary for the dirt to be washed off of those whom Jesus loved and cared for, no matter how lowly the task was. That is of course what we see in Jesus as our Redeemer, the Redeemer of the world. He humbled Himself to take our filth away, to remove from us the filth of our sin. And so Paul wrote to the Philippians.

Philippians 2:5-8 “Christ Jesus ... being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient *to the point of* death, even the death of the cross.”

Jesus humbled Himself. God the Father did not force it upon Him, humbling Jesus. Jesus humbled Himself, suffering the ignominious death of crucifixion to atone for our sins. He was our substitute, taking our place under the curse of the law and under the wrath of almighty God.

Jesus did this that we might be clean. Far better than we, He understood --

II. Our Need for Washing.

As Jesus made His way around the table He came to Peter. Peter objected to Jesus washing his feet. It just didn't seem right that Jesus, their Lord and Master, should stoop down at Peter's feet and wash the dirt and grime from his filthy feet. To Peter it seemed to shame Jesus. Don't we need to appreciate at least a little Peter's point of view? Even though Peter didn't yet perceive or understand that this was a type of the washing of our sins, Peter's point has some validity. It is a dirty shame that Jesus Christ the righteous should have to stoop down so low as to wash the grime, the filth of our sin away. Jesus however made it clear that this washing was essential to any relationship with Him. Then Peter flew to the other extreme, if the washing of his feet was good to bring him closer to Christ, than hands and head must be even better! Jesus emphasized the truth and efficacy of His grace. The washing of their feet, a washing brought by Jesus, makes one wholly clean. Except for that one who had forsaken his faith; He knew Judas would betray Him. He knew that in spite of His humbling Himself at Judas' feet, even Judas' feet, there was no turning away from sin that brought Judas down to death and hell.

So it was that Jesus, knowing our need for cleansing would wash us and make us clean. This is a marvelous gift of grace that the

Lord offers us the forgiveness of sins. He calls us to repentance that we turn away from sin in our lives lest we fall as did Judas. He calls us to repentance that we turn to Him for cleansing. Just a little later that same evening after Judas had left the upper room, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper which we will celebrate again this evening. In this sacrament Jesus continues to bring us His cleansing grace. May the Spirit lead us to respond to this gift of grace as these words written to the Hebrew Christians encourage.

Hebrews 10:21-22 “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Our need for cleansing is fulfilled in Christ Jesus. **“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”** (1 John 1⁷)

Jesus calls us to repentance and life that we might turn away from sin and its judgment and find full salvation, full cleansing in Him. So Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

You have been washed clean! You have been called out from the sin and filth of this world! You have been declared righteous before God in connection with the name of our Lord Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world who humbled Himself to make us clean!

Let us now --

III. Follow Jesus' Example.

That is what Jesus called upon the disciples to do in our text.

John 13:13-15 “You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. ¹⁴If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

Today the Roman Pontiff will have assembled some poor people from the streets of Rome, and he will have gone down the row washing their feet, thinking that he has done some great thing as Jesus told us to do. Sadly he missed the mark. He missed it by a mile. We need to learn the right lesson from Jesus and rightly follow His example. Indeed we must not think ourselves too good or important or respectable to reach down to anyone of any social class. But really it’s not about social class. It’s about sin; the sin that so easily ensnares us all. Look at the blessings we have received from the Redeemer of the world. Paul lays it out for us in Philippians chapter two.

Philippians 2:1-5 “Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

If we are to follow Jesus’ example we need to sincerely care about one another. We need to care for each other’s spiritual wellbeing. We need to consider the needs of others before our own need to be comfortable, or respectable. Jesus humbled Himself for us. Let us also humble ourselves in love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, reaching out to sinners, reaching out to sinners with the grace that we possess in Jesus. Let us call others to repentance that they might know the cleansing power of Jesus’ blood that they might know the peace of sins forgiven.

It is there for them even as it for us in the Redeemer of the World Humbled.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.