

Maundy Thursday Sermon: "Do This in Remembrance"

Tonight, the story slows down.

We've spent weeks walking with Jesus—up hillsides, across seas, through towns dusty with expectation. But now, on the threshold of the end, everything quiets. The noise of the crowds fades. The palm branches have been swept away. And in an upstairs room, with the flicker of oil lamps and the scent of wine on the air, Jesus gathers with his friends for one last supper.

Here—in a borrowed room, with a basin of water, and bread that will soon be broken.

John tells us that Jesus knows his hour has come. He knows that Judas has already made up his mind. He knows that the weight of the cross is not far off. And what does he do?

He gets up from the table.

He takes off his robe.

He ties a towel around his waist.

And he kneels.

Not in prayer. Not before a throne. But at his disciples' feet.

Now, this is the part of the story where we're meant to be shocked. Because this is not what a rabbi does. This is what the help does—the servant, the slave. Feet are filthy things in the first century. Roads are not paved. Sandals don't protect much. And yet, here is the Son of God, stooping down with water in his hands.

He takes Peter's foot—grimy, calloused, maybe even resistant—and he washes it. He does the same for James. For John. For all of them. Including Judas.

Yes, even Judas.

Because the love of Jesus doesn't flinch. It doesn't sort or separate. It doesn't ask if you deserve it before it bends down to serve. It just comes close. So close it touches the parts of us we'd rather hide.

And after he finishes, he puts his robe back on and says—gently, simply—"Do you know what I have done to you?"

And we don't. Not really.

Because it's easier to admire Jesus than to imitate him. Easier to watch from the table than to kneel with a basin. Easier to love the idea of love than to practice it with our hands and knees.

But Jesus says, "I have set you an example... just as I have done to you, you also should do."

It's not just a suggestion. It's a commandment. A *mandatum*, from which we get the name of this night—**Maundy Thursday**. Mandate Thursday. Commandment Thursday.

And the commandment is this:

Love one another.

Not in theory. Not from a distance.

But up close.

In ways that feel like foot washing. In ways that might involve dirt and discomfort and humility.

It's one thing to say we love. It's another thing to kneel and wash the feet of someone who will deny you by morning.

And after the washing, after the towel is hung to dry and the water poured out, Jesus returns to the table.

The bread is there. The wine is there. And Jesus, holding them in his hands, does something new.

He takes the bread and blesses it and breaks it. He says, **"This is my body, given for you."**

He takes the cup and says, **"This is my blood, poured out for you."**

And in that moment, something holy happens. Something irreversible.

Jesus takes the ordinary materials of a meal—bread, wine—and he pours himself into them. He doesn't give them a lecture. He doesn't give them a doctrine. He gives them a meal. Something they can taste and touch. Something to hold onto when the world begins to fall apart.

"Do this in remembrance of me," he says.

Not *think* about this. Not *understand* this.

But *do* this.

With your hands. With your mouths. With your lives.

Because memory, for Jesus, is never just about the past. It's about bringing the past into the present. It's about making the truth real again, here and now. Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we remember who he is. And we remember who *we are*—a people claimed by a love we did not earn, called to a service we may not always understand.

And maybe that's the heart of this night:

A bowl of water.

A broken loaf.

A cup passed from hand to hand.

All of it whispering:

This is what God looks like.

God is not far off, cloaked in thunder. God is here, kneeling with a towel. God is here, offering bread. God is here, loving to the end.

So what are we to do with all this?

First, we let ourselves be washed. That might be the hardest part. Because it means letting someone come close. It means showing the places we'd rather keep hidden. But Jesus won't shame you. He won't pull back. His love knows where you've walked. And he kneels anyway.

Then, once we've been washed, we rise. We pick up the towel. We offer the same grace to others—especially when it's hard. Especially when it costs us. That's how the world will know who we follow—not by our perfect theology, but by our willingness to love in practical, humbling, tender ways.

And finally, we return to the table. We come with empty hands, hungry hearts. And we are fed—not with answers, but with presence. With the real, pulsing, self-giving presence of Jesus. Given for us.

Given for you.

And in the holy hush of this evening, Jesus says:

Do this.

Love one another.

Remember me.

Not once a year.

But always.

With your hands.

With your heart

With your life.

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Amen