

Maundy Thursday C (3/24/2016)

Exodus 12:1-14

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Christian faith is a matter of contrasts. Sinner-saints follow, stumbling, in the footsteps of a servant-Lord. We share a meal that is both common and extraordinary. And, the love by which God gathers us and to which Christ calls us makes kindred out of strangers.

Christian faith is a matter of contrasts. Life is marked by darkness and light, suffering and hope. God is beyond our wildest imagining, transcending space and time, and closer than anything else, here with us in this moment. The kingdom of God is already breaking in among us, and has yet to be fulfilled. And, in the in-between, we sinner-saints follow, stumbling, in the footsteps of a servant-Lord.

Contrasts.

Maundy Thursday commemorates Jesus' final meal with his disciples. The story of the Last Supper in the Gospel of John mentions virtually nothing of the meal itself, and focuses instead on Jesus' act of humble service, the work of a slave, washing his disciples' feet. No conventional king would be caught dead offering this kind of hospitality, but Jesus is no conventional king. And, in one final act of solidarity with the world God so loves, he is caught dead, his body broken on an instrument of our cruelty.

Contrasts.

The Lord sets the standard for servanthood. The king dies like a criminal. And, as a means of remembering his death until he comes, we share a meal that is both common and extraordinary. Simple bread and wine, his singular body and blood, given and poured out for us. And in response to the gift of his very life, we pour ourselves out for each other, and wash each other's feet. "Just as I have loved you," Jesus commands, "you also should love one another."

It's awkward to be washed and to wash, but the discomfort we feel is like the discomfort of the cross, and the love we pour out is like the love of the cross. Hear the story of Melvin:

[excerpt from *Worship Guidebook for Lent and the Three Days*, p.113]

Contrasts.

Battle-hardened and beautiful. Sinner and saint. Strangers and brothers.

Come to the basin, dear church; wash and be washed. Then, come to the table; eat and drink, and be strengthened to feed the hungry. Come together, then leave again, and the love by which God gathers us and to which Christ calls us will make kindred out of strangers.