

The Hand of the Lord Who Serves

Maundy Thursday

April 17, 2025

Pastor Matthew Ude

John 13:1-17,31-35 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. ² And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray Him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵ After 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. ⁶ Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." ⁸ Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my hands and my head!*" ¹⁰ Jesus 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." ¹¹ For 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. ³¹ So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. ³² "If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. ³³ "Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you. ³⁴ "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

If you trip or about to be hit by a bus, what do you do with your hands? The natural reaction is to throw them up to protect your face, or to stop what is coming.

Jesus knows what is about to happen, but he doesn't throw up his hands to protect himself. He doesn't try to stop what is about to happen. Instead, he puts his hands down. He lays aside his garment. He picks up a towel. Jesus knows all things that were about to happen but chose to use his hands to serve his disciples and us.

Therefore, tonight we consider the hands of the Lord who serves.

Jesus washes his disciples' feet

Jesus was Lord and God. As we just confessed in the Nicene Creed he is "begotten not made." As we have heard in our lent series His hands were capable of great things. With his hands he created the world. He cleansed the lepers. He raised the dead. Yet Jesus makes the deliberate choice with those same hands he chose to serve his disciples. He washes their feet. This was a menial task reserved for slaves, yet Jesus does not hesitate to serve his disciples in this way.

Jesus makes it clear that this washing of feet is not a new sacrament but an example. "I have given you an example," he says.

John 13:14-15 "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

The washing of feet was one way that people at that time could serve one another, but it was just one example. These days people don't need you to wash their feet, but they do need help in many other ways. If the Lord was willing to get his hands dirty washing others feet, what should we do for one another? Jesus washes feet as an example that we ought to serve one another.

Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

Jesus' washing of feet was an example in another more important way. It was an example of his service for us. Just as he served his disciples then by washing their feet so also he serves us even today. As Paul also writes in Ephesians:

Ephesians 1:22-23 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

We have heard many other examples of his service throughout this Lenten season. His hands protected and rescued Peter from the waves. His hands cast out the demons. His hands cleansed the leper and raised the dead.

In all these ways Jesus still serves us. Just as he washed the disciples' feet so he washes our souls through baptism. Just as he cast out the demons, so his hands keep Satan that roaring lion from devouring us. Just as he pulled Peter out of the waves, so he surrounds us with his protection while we walk through the storms and turmoil of this life.

Jesus' washing of feet is an example to us of Jesus love for us. It is a reminder of his service to us.

He not only served them in the washing of feet but also in the literal serving of the body and blood of the Lord's supper. With his hand he broke the bread, with his hands he held the cup and blessed it. With his hand he serves us tonight as he served his disciples 2000 years ago. The supper we are about to receive is not about our service, but about his service for us.

In 1 Corinthians Paul corrects this same attitude in the Corinthian church. They were making the Lord's Supper all about themselves. Paul reminds them "I gave to you," that is I served you exactly what I received, that is what the Lord served to me.

"This is my body, this is my blood which was broken and shed for you."

Tonight, I serve you that which I also received and more than that the Lord serves you. Tonight, the Lord serves you with his hands, his very body and blood which was given into death for your sins.

It is the hand of the Lord which serves you.

Blaise Pascal was a seventeenth century French philosopher, who proposed what is known as Pascal's wager. Basically, he suggested that we have everything to gain from believing in God and not much to lose.

As Paul reminds us,

1 Corinthians 15:20 Christ is risen from the dead

He has served us with his hands. Placing his hands on the cross for our sins. Giving us his body and blood in the Lord's supper, and winning for us freedom from sin and eternal life. Since he has served us all this we do not need to hang on to the pleasures of this life but may gladly give our lives for one another as he gave his life for us.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. He has given us his love on the cross and in his supper. Our love and service for one another flows from this service he has given to us.