

The Lord's Message: Grace to All

Date: October 10, 2021

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: John 13:1-17

This passage of scripture is the Gospel that is often used for Maundy Thursday. Maundy Thursday is the last meal the Jesus ate with his disciples before his crucifixion. During this worship service, there may be a service of foot-washing. If you have ever been part of the service of foot-washing, you may have felt uneasy about washing someone else's feet or having your feet washed. You may have been humbled by this experience. Frankly, some people find this completely disgusting and want no part in it. God extends Grace to all, and as followers of Jesus, we are called to do the same.

Let us pray.

Hospitality is integral in both the Old and New Testaments. In **Genesis 2:8**, this verse reads that God "put" the man that He had formed in the Garden. God made the Garden for humans to live in. God made the animals and the plants for us. I would say that God showed hospitality and welcomed us into His creation. God just did not beam us down into the Garden. God created Adam. God created Eve. God created the environment for all human beings to live in. God showed His hospitality and grace to all. God continued to live with His creation until sin entered the picture. Holy God could not be around sin, because God would destroy sin and, in the process, destroy all of creation including us.

This idea of hospitality comes from God. This idea is part of our DNA. Hospitality and Grace are not just sharing a meal with someone, but to identify with them and to make them part of the community.

Abraham showed hospitality to God in **Genesis 18**. God goes to Abraham with two angels with plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their great wickedness. Later on, we find out how wicked they are, when men of Sodom try to have sex with the angels. Before all of this takes place, God comes to Abraham with two of the angels and Abraham shows them hospitality, even though Abraham does not recognize these strangers. Abraham shows hospitality and grace. The writer in **Hebrews 13:2** sums up this event.

In the time of Jesus, hospitality and grace are still very important. Jesus many times offered hospitality and grace and received hospitality and grace from others. Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors. Jesus had conversation with women. A few examples are: the woman caught in adultery (that we looked at several weeks ago), the woman from Samaria at the well, Mary and Martha, and Mary Magdalene.

One of the common practices of hospitality and grace was foot washing. Most people traveled in muddy, rocky, and sandy conditions. Your feet would be covered in dust or, if it rained, caked in mud. The custom of the day was when you came to a person's house, the slaves or servants would have large urns of water ready to wash your feet. At the wedding in Cana the original purpose of the water that Jesus turned into wine was to wash the guest's feet. Of course, the reason was to clean the feet of the guests from the dirt and filth of traveling to the wedding.

There is a deeper meaning in the practice of foot washing. This deeper meaning is that you are being identified with and welcomed as part of the community. Romans, Greeks and other cultures practiced foot-washing as a sign of identifying with and welcome as part of the community.

Now, we do not practice foot washing today in our homes or sadly in most of our churches. The main reason is that we have socks and shoes and other foot apparel that protects our feet which was not available in the time of Jesus. Other reasons might be that people's feet are smelly, are not pretty to look at, and may have bunions or corns. Some people don't like their feet being touched, or might be ticklish, or are just uncomfortable with this practice. There are probably other reasons why people do not practice foot washing anymore.

Let us dive into this passage of scripture today. If you have your Bible open to **John 13:3**, this is where I am going to start to dig deeper into these verses. Jesus knew what His identity was. He was from God. He would be returning to God. His power came from God. Jesus did not have any doubts of who and whose He was. Jesus was, is, and will always be God's Son. All of God resides in Jesus. Jesus is in community with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In **John 13:4-5**, Jesus is taking the position of a servant or a slave. It was the lowest servant or slave's job to wash the feet. Even though Jesus identified with God, Jesus still could humble himself and take on the form of a servant or a slave. Paul writes about Jesus' humility in **Philippians 2:6-8**.

This humility does not go unnoticed. Peter is aghast as to what His Messiah, Jesus, is doing. The dialogue between Peter and Jesus is found in **John 13:6-10**. After Jesus finished washing all the disciples' feet, then Jesus puts on his robe and returns to the table.

I want us to think about these disciples for a minute. Who were they? Six of them were fishermen, Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathaniel, James and John. Matthew was a despised tax collector. Simon was a Zealot. The Zealots wanted to overthrow the Roman government. Judas Iscariot was thief and embezzler. We have no other information about the rest. A very diverse group. Peter, you probably remember, denied knowing Jesus three times. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. All of them fled the Garden of Gethsemane at the arrest of Jesus. Jesus knew all of this and still washed the feet of the disciples. Jesus forgave them all. When I said all, I believe that Jesus even forgave Judas Iscariot.

This idea of forgiveness does not mean that we have not been harmed by someone else. We turn over our hate and anger to God and tell God, you are the judge, not me. This frees us from a burden of hurt, pain and revenge. If we do not forgive, then we carry this burden for the rest of our lives. This burden can affect our relationship with our spouse, our children, our friends, and even God. If we follow Jesus, then we will turn our pain, hurt and anger over to God and forgive the person for what they have done to us. Our relationship with this person may never be restored, but this burden will not affect the other relationships that we have, including our relationship with God.

In **John 13:12-17**, that is why Jesus says to follow his example. We say in the Lord's Prayer, "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us." Jesus has set the example for us to follow to show Grace to All. Amen.