

Maundy Thursday C, 2013

Text: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Title: Two Stories in One

+ INI +

There are two stories in the Upper Room, two big events that happen as Jesus gathers one last time with His disciples. First, Jesus washes His disciples' feet. Then He gives them His body and blood to eat and to drink.

What's very odd is that nobody tells both stories together. John tells the story of Jesus washing the feet. Matthew, Mark and Luke, and even Paul tell the story of the Lord's Supper. Both no one tells them both.

In the end, these stories are remarkably similar. Even though Jesus does different things, they fit together perfectly.

The story of the foot washing begins with Jesus serving the disciples. He takes the lowest of the jobs. The job no one else wanted to do, the dirty job that the disciples were too good to do: scrubbing dirty, grimy, filthy feet. Jesus humbled Himself, He lowered Himself to serve His disciples and to be their slave.

And then He said, "This is how you are to love one another," by serving, by getting your hands dirty, and doing the dirty job no one else wants to do, changing diapers, wiping noses, giving rides and cooking meals, spending hours on the phone with someone who doesn't really have anything to say, but still needs someone to talk to, forgiving people even when they sin against you. This is what love looks like, God Himself on His knees washing feet.

Jesus serves you and then transforms you into a servant, too.
And that's what happens in the Lord's Supper, too, isn't it?

It begins with Jesus serving you, Jesus doing what no one else wanted to do, Jesus doing what no one else could do, Jesus breaking His own body and shedding His own blood for you.

He serves you here. This is the Lord's Table. He is the Host and you are the guest. Here He cares for your every need, washing away your sins, your uncleanness, all the filth and dirt and grime that you have tracked in here, with His holy precious blood, washed clean, made white by the blood of the lamb.

But it doesn't end with Jesus serving you here at this table. Jesus transforms you to be a servant like Him, giving of yourself to those who are in need of love and forgiveness.

The Lord's Supper is not just about you and Jesus, a special private moment of communion with the Divine, the Lord's Supper is about all of us together, joining as one body to be served by Jesus and then to serve one another.

If you commune together can you then spread rumors and gossip about one another?

If you commune together can you still hold grudges and refuse to forgive one another?

If you commune together can you refuse any opportunity to love and serve one another?

No, you can't.

The work that Jesus does in you is not merely for your benefit, but for your neighbors, your brothers and sisters, the whole body of Christ.

The forgiveness Jesus gives you is for you to give to those around you. This is how things began tonight: forgiveness for you, but not just for you, for all of us together, forgiveness and peace to share with all around you.

That's how Jesus' gifts work. They are too big to fit into you, and so they spill over, they overflow into the lives of the people around you.

It's like trying to pour a gallon of milk into an 8 oz glass. You can't do it, it's going to overflow.

Jesus' overflowing love is a testament to the world around us. "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Nothing turns people off more than Christians who don't love one another, who don't forgive each other, who fight and squabble, who would rather be lords than servants.

On the other hand, the selfless, sacrificial, servant love of Jesus is a beacon, a light that draws people in to learn more of Jesus and His incredible transformative love.

The love of Jesus was there in the Upper Room as Jesus washed and fed His disciples. But Jesus didn't stay there in the Upper Room. He led His disciples to Gethsemane to pray.

We see His love as He lets Himself be arrested without resisting.

We see His love as He submits to abuse and insults, mocking and beating.

We see His love as He walks the way to Calvary, as He forgives those who crucify Him, as He gives His mother into the care of His beloved disciple and as He promises paradise to thief next to Him.

This is the kind of love that Jesus has for you. And this is the kind of love that you have for your fellow Christian, the dirty, smelly, sinful person sitting in the pew next to you and standing in the pulpit tonight. Jesus even washed Judas' feet. Jesus died for people who would never come to faith in Him. That's the kind of love that Jesus has for you, and that you now show to those around you.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”