

## Maundy Thursday – Named and Claimed by Love

John 13:1-17; 31b-35 OSL, Hermosa, SD 2010

### Story: Atlanta

- On a warm, fall evening I found myself on the streets of downtown Atlanta for a reception party as part of a week-long conference
- Man on street corner asking for money – just needed enough to pay for his boarding house room for that night – he'd get a paycheck the next day
- I became guarded and went into "judgment" mode – he had to "prove" to me that he needed the money and was telling the truth (my misuse of power)
- Determined he wouldn't be there the next day asking for money
- One friend, Carol, readily gave him some money, while Karen and I reluctantly did so. Carol also asked if we could pray w/him. Stood in circle, holding hands on that Atlanta street corner
- He wanted to do something for us. He sang 2 songs – Amazing Grace and one about Noah's Ark and the rainbow as a sign of God's promise
- He told us to be safe
- Walked several more blocks and finally down a darkened street to our parked car (later found out we had parked in a very unsafe area)
- Next day at the conference the special music began the session – the group sang the same 2 songs
- I began to think about Jesus' "new" commandment: Love one another just as I have loved you
- It wasn't hard to figure out who had followed his commandment the previous night

### Love

It is said that we learn through repetition. What is in this passage are we supposed to remember? In the last few verses that were read, we hear the word "glorify" repeated 5 times and "love" repeated four times (depending on translation). Those two words brought together impact the gospel of John and his concern in what it means to be a disciple of Jesus – a part of a Christian community (especially in light of Jesus washing the feet of disciples).

Love is not just doing something, but is a matter of receiving something. Love is not just warm, fuzzy feelings we have for another person, but about a gift given w/o asking for anything in return. First, Peter refuses to have his feet washed by his leader, Jesus. But then, when he learns what it means and that he needs it done, he wants Jesus to wash all of him! God gave his Son as a gift wrapped up in his death (and resurrection, which we await for through these Holy Week days). A gift given, no based upon what you or I, as a sinner, can do, but who we are as a child of God – a thirsty sinner who "receives the repentance that leads to life (Acts)."

### **Story: Max Lucado and the dog from *Traveling Light***

In a couple of weeks we will be having a book study on the book *Traveling Light* by Max Lucado. One of my favorite stories he tells in that particular book is very fitting for this evening. For the last 20 years Max wanted a dog. A big dog. But there were always problems. The apartment was too small. The budget was too tight. The girls were too young. But most of all, his wife, Denalyn, was unenthusiastic. Her logic? She'd already married one slobbering, shedding beast, why put up with a second? So they compromised and got a small dog.

Max liked Salty, but he thought that small dogs weren't really dogs. They don't bark; they yelp. They don't eat; they nibble. They don't lick you; they sniff you. He liked Salty, but he wanted a real dog. A big dog. A man's-best-friend type of dog you could saddle and wrestle or both.

Max was alone in his passion until his daughter, Sara, was born. As she grew older she loved dogs and the two of them were able to sway the household vote. His wife gave in, and Sara and Max began the search. They discovered a woman in South Carolina who breeds golden retrievers in a Christian environment. From birth the dogs are surrounded by inspirational music and prayers. When the trainer told Max that she had read his books, he got on board. A woman with such good taste is bound to be a good breeder of dogs, right?

So Max ordered a pup. They mailed the check, selected the name Molly, and cleared a corner for her dog pillow. They hadn't even seen the dog face-to-muzzle yet and she was named, claimed, and given a place in the house.

Can't the same be said about you? Long before your first whimper, your Master claimed you, named you, and hung a reserved sign on your room. You and Molly have more in common than you think. You're both being groomed for a trip. You're being prepared for your Master's house. You don't know the departure date or flight number, but you can bet your puppy chow that you'll be seeing your Owner someday. Isn't this the concluding promise of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm: "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"? You see, this day too, this Maundy Thursday, is about God's claim of love on you.

### **Named and Claimed**

There are those that think and feel that they are alone. They don't know that God has named them and claimed them. They don't know that the darkness of these days of Jesus' life filled with a commandment to love and serve leads to the brightness of hope on Easter morning. They may see Jesus as a role model that is just too hard to imitate. Jesus is not just an example of how to live, but is the one who freed and empowered you and me to be able to love. We love because he first loved us. In John, the visible signs of God's majesty are in the acts of power verified in Jesus' death and resurrection. You are freed from your sinful self – freed b/c your sinful self is crucified with Christ.

### **Story: Dr. Fred Craddock – "A Great Inheritance"**

**(Ben, an older man, looks back on his life and tells this story of the most life-changing moment of his life.)** My mother wasn't married when I was born, so I had a pretty hard time. When I started school, my classmates had a name for me, and it wasn't a very nice name. I used to go off by myself at recess and lunchtime because the things they said to me cut me so

deep. What was worse was going to town on Saturday afternoons and feeling like every eye was burning a hole through me, wondering just who my father was.

When I was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to our church. I would always go in late and slip out early. But one day the preacher said the benediction so fast I got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. I could feel every eye in the church on me. Just about the time I got to the door I felt a big hand on my shoulder. I looked up and the preacher was looking right at me. 'Who are you, son? Whose boy are you?' he asked. I felt this big weight coming down on me. It was like a big gray cloud. Even the preacher was putting me down. But as he looked down at me, studying my face, he began to smile a big smile of recognition. 'Wait a minute!' he said. 'I know who you are. I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God.' With that he slapped me on the back and said, "Boy, you've got a great inheritance. Go and claim it."

### **Conclusion: Serve, Share, Love**

Jesus' new commandment "to love one another" accompanies the washing of the feet. That command is packed with lots of grace. He doesn't give the command and then step away from his disciples or from us. Jesus steps in and does the very thing he demands of us, for us. He takes the position of a servant to wash the feet of the disciples.

It is out of this command filled with grace that you are marked by God – named and claimed through the Son. And it is out of that command filled with grace that we look towards the darkness of the coming days to come into the light of the Easter celebration.