

Maundy Thursday 2017

If the author of John's Gospel had his way, we wouldn't just be sharing bread and wine, the body and blood of our Lord, each Sunday.

No, if he had his way, every Sunday we'd also show up with a bucket and a sponge, and turn to our neighbor, and wash her feet!

Unlike the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which focus on the last **supper** of Jesus the night before he is killed, John's final gathering that night focuses on Jesus **washing the feet** of his friends.

One of the things we have discovered in our weekly totally cool Bible Study class is that while all of the gospels are deep and profound, John's gospel is, perhaps, the deepest, the most profound, something like a deli sandwich with a kazillion different meats...

Every time you take a bite, there's a new flavor to be discovered!

Tonight, John isn't displacing the last supper, he isn't downplaying the body and blood, the bread and wine, he's helping us understand more deeply what it means.

In taking the most basic everyday stuff of our nourishment, simple bread, red wine, and transforming it into the most sacred thing imaginable; the body and blood of the Son of God, John is pointing the way for us to encounter life...living a life that can see and hear God in the most ordinary of things.

But John knows something about us too.

His is the last gospel to be written, and so he has the benefit of watching how communities handle this simple message of the bread and wine.

And what he sees is that people, everywhere and always, have a knack for turning what is intended to be a meal open to all, a table to which everyone is invited, well, we are very good at drawing lines, and creating rules that exclude, and as time goes by, turning what was intended to be a way for us to see God at work in the simplest aspects of life, into high holy ritual, surrounded by magic, presided over by the select few...

Which is perhaps why St. John gives us the lesson we have today.

Because feet are feet.

They grow bunions and attract warts, toenails get ingrown and sometimes infected, and if they are my son's feet, they give off an odor so foul that it ought to be banned by the Geneva Convention as a poisonous gas!

It's hard to ritualize dirty feet.

It's hard to set up a hierarchy of smelly toes.

And while the sacrament of the bread and wine has evolved so that priests dressed to the nines stand before the holy altar while everyone else kneels, on this night, St. John sees to it that those same priests remove their colorful clothes, and before heading to the sacred altar, kneel before each and every one of you, taking bunions and warts and dirt and grime, and washing them with tender loving care.

And in that way, reminding all of us that the way of God in this world is through quiet and humble service; that the strength of God is found in what we humans call weakness; that despite all appearances to the contrary, it's not bunker busting bombs or sarin gas that wins the day, it is mercy, it is kindness, it is love.

+amen