

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster

March April 14th, Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-14 Psalm 116:1, 10-17 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 John 13:1-17, 31b-35

A new commandment, love one another, by this they will know you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

This too is about relationships. Love is the cornerstone of who we are in community. Although it's from another time and place it doesn't really make sense for us today the foot washing is an interesting symbol of what it means to love.

Because of covid and all the restrictions I thought it best not to have the foot washing this year. But it is interesting to think about it today.

The foot washing is a servant behavior treating others as more important than the person doing the foot washing. It doesn't make sense to ask the person whose foot is being washed to raise their foot in the air so the person doing the washing can stand and being above the person whose foot is being washed.

This symbolizes the reality of loving God and neighbor is to put God and neighbor first at times in our lives. That means we allow them to set the agenda and put their needs before ours.

I know it's not Christmas, but a Christmas story comes to mind. It's the O'Henry story about the poor young couple at Christmas time. She had beautiful long hair and he had a nice pocket watch. she has her hair cut and sold to buy him a chain for the pocket watch, and he sells his watch to buy combs for his wife's hair.

It would be an oversimplification and missing the point if we think of the message is just about love.

Yes, it's about love but what about it? Foot washing is about a servant or slave washing the feet of a master or a guest. In other words, the person doing the foot washing is in an inferior social status position from the one whose feet is being washed. And the one who's feet are being washed is considered superior in that dynamic.

And the couple in the story willing to give up their most prized possession for the love of the other.

This reminds us that love is more than a feeling, more than caring for someone and considering them are equal. That love is about action and putting into practice our feelings to the point of sacrificing for the benefit of the other. That the needs of the other, come first for us at that moment, and at other moments as well.

In a strange way, it's showing how important and valuable the person we're showing love to is, without demeaning ourselves. The world seems to say that it's a zero-sum game. That if one person gains, the other loses. But what Jesus is saying is, we can show love and respect and care for others, but it doesn't mean that we are any less valuable than we were before.

There is a sense of some sort of partnership in relationship. We are to bring out the best in them, and in turn relationships bring out the best in us.

And yes, like the couple, we can show love and respect to each other in this way.

I think I'll stop there and see what you may have to say about the reading the sermon or what comes to mind.

Amen