

**Commandment ---- Communion --- Community**  
**Maundy Thursday**  
**Exodus 12:1-14 & John 13:1-19 & 31-34**

Exodus 12:1-14

*1. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: 2. This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. 3. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. 4. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. 5. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. 7. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 8. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. 10. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. 11. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. 12. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. 13. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. 14. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.*

John 13:1-19, 31-34

*Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper 3. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God 4. got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7. Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8. Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9. Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10. Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." 11. For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." 12. After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13. You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. 14. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. 18. I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' 19. I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. {Gk [I am]}*

<sup>31</sup> When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup> Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ <sup>34</sup> I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The ending of our Old Testament reading found in Exodus 12:14 sets the stage for our New Testament reading found in John chapter thirteen. Listen again to the words the Lord gave to Moses, “*This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.*” Our good friend, John, gives us tonight’s special name: “Maundy Thursday.” “Maundy” comes from the Latin word “mandatum,” meaning “command.” The reference is John 13:34: “***A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.***” Maundy Thursday—a new command to celebrate—Love One Another!

### **COMMANDMENT --- LOVE**

The Gospel of John is truly a love letter from the Lord our God. It begins with this powerful promise of John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*”

All throughout the Gospel, the love of God and the love of Christ is told. It is never told in a more pointed and humbling way than in John 13. We are told at the very beginning of Jesus’ love when we hear these words, “*Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*”

Jesus knew that His hour had come. He turns from trying to convince the world of His love, chapters one through twelve, to **showing** the world His love. In chapters 13-17 Jesus spends His last few hours of life pouring out His love in a very real and personal way. Chapters 13 through 17 are called “The Upper Room Discourse.” John tells us that Jesus loved those who were in the world and that He would show them His full extent of love --- Jesus would love them to the end. This Upper Room Discourse begins with a powerful emphasis on love and it ends with wonderful promise of love as Jesus is praying His last prayer with the disciples. John 17:26 ends the Upper Room Discourse with these words of love from God, the Father, and Jesus, the Son. “*I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*”

The Greek verb αγαπω, “love,” occurs 25 times in these chapters (including in the framing verses 13:1 and 17:26), and the cognate noun αγαπη an additional six times. Similarly the noun “commandment” (εντολη) occurs six times, and its cognate verb (εντελλομαι) another three times. Even the very giving of the love command itself is found in almost verbatim repetition (cf. 13:34 and 15:12). Everything that preceded this moment in Jesus’ ministry and everything that will follow it are demonstrations of the active love between the Father, the Son and the disciples.

Our Christian faith is founded on the love of God: God’s love in the past, God’s love in the present and God’s love in the future. Jesus came to demonstrate the full extent of God’s love.

### **Hear the teaching of Christ:**

***A new commandment I give to you — Love one another.***

***As I have loved you, so you must love one another.***

### ***COMMUNION --- LOVE DEMONSTRATED***

The demonstration of this love is given to us in the washing of the disciples' feet. On this night, this first Maundy Thursday night, Jesus began teaching, not with words--those might have been misunderstood—but He began with an action—an action they would never misunderstand.

Jesus asked the disciples if they knew what He'd just finished doing—loving, serving, and teaching. Knowing and doing are the two sides of servanthood. Most of us gathered here tonight know that God loves us, that Christ died for us and the Holy Spirit lives in us. That's great—we have completed one side of servanthood—the **knowing** side. Now, the question for us is—the **doing** side of servanthood.

Let's imagine that we're at that first Maundy Thursday.

What would it be like? We're settled in around the table. We've been arguing about which one of us is the greatest, and who will get to sit at Jesus' right or left side. We're focused on ourselves and our desires. We don't know all that the disciples were thinking but we know they had gathered to celebrate and we know the authorities are looking for Jesus--to kill him. We know we're supposed to have a slave come and wash our feet but we don't want to go outside and look for one because it's too dangerous. Instead, we just sit there wondering which one of us is going to wash feet.

In Jewish culture the task of washing feet was left to a slave—but not a Jewish slave. No, the Jewish slave was exempt from washing feet. The act of washing feet was so humbling that this dirty job was left to those outside their culture—this was the job of the Gentile slave. And here is our leader, our teacher, our rabbi, our Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the great I AM—taking off his outer garment...and to our utter amazement...Jesus picks up the basin and the towel. He comes to us one by one and bends down and lovingly washes our feet.

What would we have done? Would we have sat in silence? Would we have spoken out like Peter? Would we have jumped up and taken the basin from Jesus' hands?

“Just like Peter, there are places we have walked that have left us with dirty feet. Where have you been walking lately? Have you been lingering on the path of bitterness, lollygagging in an angry place, or shuffling around in self-pity? Have you spent too much time on the road to success and too little time in His presence? Have you been dancing with fear, or hanging with the unholy? Have you been sidestepping His voice? Examine where you've been. Jesus wants to move toward you with the towel and the basin.”<sup>1</sup>

So What?

### ***COMMUNITY --- LOVE SHARED***

Community is defined by Webster as “a unified body of individuals or a people with common interests.” Many of you have heard of community centers, or a community chest, community property and community colleges. Is the church a community? What defines a church? I recently heard a friend say that the church is a community that is called live in the world. He said, “don't live in the world and go to church --- live in the church and go into the world.” I think that is exactly what Jesus is telling His disciples the last night He with them.

Tonight we come to the table—the Maundy Thursday table—and we remember once again the new command we've been given by Jesus: LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

In a few moments, we are going to remember the Passover Meal with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is the blood of the unblemished Lamb of God who takes away our sins. No matter where we've been, what we've done thought or said—Christ came to wash our dirty feet. He knows all about us and still loves us. In spite of denials, betrayals, doubts, fears and questions—Jesus still stoops to serve.

On this night of nights, we've been given a new command: LOVE ONE ANOTHER as Christ has loved us.

In the fall of 2009, the United Nations set aside October 15, as Global Hand Washing Day, noting that it's the simplest yet most effective of lifesaving concepts. Here's a crazy thought: If hand washing can save millions of lives, what might a "Global Foot Washing Day" accomplish? If hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of disease, what does a good old-fashioned foot washing prevent? Pride? Self-centeredness? How might *that* make the world a better place?

After Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he returned to the table and asked them, "Do you know what I've done for you?" Tonight, Jesus challenges us to move from knowing to doing.

Questions for Reflection --- How would we demonstrate love?

What characteristics of Christ most stand out to you based on his washing of the disciples' feet?

What is the foot washing equivalent in our culture which would communicate these qualities?

Jesus washed their feet, and they were to do as he had done. To whom? Each other? Their disciples? The outside world?

And what were they supposed to do? Go wash feet, or was there something else?

Who is one person whose "feet" God wants you to "wash"? How should you do this?

Round Rock Presbyterian Church  
Round Rock, Texas 78681  
April 1, 2010 --- Maundy Thursday  
Rev. David Peters

---

<sup>1</sup> Graham Cooke, *God Revealed*, Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2003.