

## **JESUS PAID OUR DEBT TO ONE ANOTHER**

Hear the Word of God for this Maundy-Thursday, as the Lord's unbroken Service of the Triduum begins again with recollection of events of eternal significance:

*If then I washed all of your feet (as) the Lord and Teacher, then all of you have (a) debt to one another to wash the feet; for example I gave to all of you, that just as I did to all of you, also all of you must do.<sup>1</sup>*

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

This is an annual night in the Church calendar wherein Jesus' disciples are given, through the Visible and Proclaimed Word, the joy of recalling afresh all that Jesus came, did, and does for us in serving us His gifts. Tonight, that which the Church has long called the Triduum, the Word has begun for us a three-night, three-day continuous Lord's Service. In the continuous service of our Lord, we shall learn anew that Jesus paid our sin debt, to God and to one another.

This all began to be revealed as God again came serving us. In His Service, the Holy Spirit moved us to call upon God by His Name. In that Invocation of the Divine, we recognized that He has willed to be in our midst in His Divine Service. His Word from our mouths declares to us that we are people who have truly learned to call Him Lord and Teacher, just as His first followers in the flesh declared of Him.

The Triduum Lord's Service, celebrated here in seven parts, is the means by which God grants us His grace as Lent ends and Resurrection begins. Through His Service to us, through His Word and Sacraments, His grace brings forgiveness. What wonderful good work He does in our ears, in our sight, in our touch, in our taste, in our smell!

All of that began our three days of Divine Gift reception in the naming of His Name over us. It proceeds through the many parts of His continual Service to us. As the Word tunes our senses, we recognize afresh that God comes to serve us His gifts. He unites us in the common confession of His love for us from this evening's

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<sup>1</sup> John 13:14-15.

invocation until the closing benediction on Easter Evening.

It is no mere coincidence that God has again opened His Service to us, in our ears and eyes, with the very words that were to have been spoken over each of us as He washed away our sins. This day is given to lead us each year at this time into recalling Jesus' touch upon sinners. It is through contact with water united with God's Word in Holy Baptism, that true disciples of Jesus have remained faithful to following Jesus' example of serving one another.

That means that God's work of washing and regenerating us is to be repeatedly reinforced in us each Maundy-Thursday through His Word. Why, even the *Maundy* part of the title for this annual day of remembrance can point us to the reality that it is Jesus' washing of those tainted by sin which makes them, us, you, clean. If the day's name is truly derived from Latin, *mundo*, it means "to wash." In fact, other ancient names for this day, *Clare Thursday* or *Sheer Thursday*, mean "clean." So, in remembering the true cleanness that comes to the faithful from Jesus' washing from us our sins, we are given to hear Jesus say, to Peter first, and then to us:

*If not I may have washed you, not have you part with Me.<sup>2</sup>*

The positive meaning of that negative statement is that those who are washed by Jesus have part in Him. Those who were served that night, with the exception of Judas (whose actions several of you heard about yesterday, "Spy Wednesday"), did more than receive Jesus' washing. They, a few days after Jesus started on the path to intensely loving them, serving them unto death, began to take part in His washing.

They who were immediately served by Him on the night in which He was betrayed began days after to serve Him to those who would come after them in the Faith. From generation to generation the faithful of our Lord, by His washing others into forgiveness through them, have fulfilled their faith debt to one another. In fact, tonight, in serving one another out of Jesus' service, we declare His blood-bought forgiveness even as Jesus said we would, when He said,

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<sup>2</sup> *John 13:8b.*

*If then I washed all of your feet (as) the Lord and Teacher, then all of you have (a) debt to one another to wash the feet; for example I gave to all of you, that just as I did to all of you, also all of you must do.<sup>3</sup>*

Now, in this place, as we serve one another the forgiveness He died to bring, He again is serving us. We have part in Him through the Sacraments He gave to His first disciples to share. In His Service to us, God moved us to remember that when we hear His Word of Holy Absolution, we return to the Baptismal washing He gave.

This evening we returned, as Lent ends, to the manner in which Lent began among us. As individuals, after we confessed our sins before Him and one another, we received in our ears the forgiveness brought by Jesus' washing. Through the gift of touch, you are reminded that your personal reception of Jesus' gift of forgiveness liberates you to love as He loves. You are free to absolve those who sin against you.

Also, from our day's text, we learn that as Jesus washed His disciples' feet as an example to them, followers of Jesus in the Faith incur a debt to one another. That debt is paid by God through you when baptized sinner/saints hear you forgive them their sins against you.

In fact, the debt of which Jesus speaks again tonight is one which He repaid. Jesus paid our obligation to one another in the Faith when He bore our sins into death and the grave. That thought leads us to words proclaimed at the beginning of tonight's Gospel reading:

*Now before the Feast of the Pascha, Jesus, having known that the hour of Him had come that He might have departed from this cosmos to the Father, having sacrificially loved His own in the cosmos, into (the) end sacrificially loved them.<sup>4</sup>*

Through our ears, in the retelling of the "washing-Thursday" events, we remember Jesus' love for His disciples. He forgave them their sins. He gave them the gift of Holy Baptism, which forgave them their sins. He led them to the reality that, as forgiven sinners, they were free to forgive others, as has been done among us this evening in Confession and Holy Absolution. Jesus then gave to those whom He

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<sup>3</sup> John 13:14-15.

<sup>4</sup> John 13:1:b,c.

baptized and absolved the power to receive His forgiveness – and strengthening to life everlasting – through the Sacrament of the Altar.

Through those gifts, Jesus' service continues among those to whom He continues to give the divine right to call Him Lord and Teacher. Through human participation in and sharing of the means of grace Jesus serves His people His blood-bought forgiveness. In celebrating His gifts, in sharing them with the faithful, people who have part in Jesus pay their debt of service – not to Him – but to one another. His Divine Service to us gives us His gifts which we freely share. (If you do not wish to share them, repent, turn from your sin! Know that just as Christ died for the sins of the whole world, He died for you, to free you from sin). That leads us to recognize the reality that, through His service to us, in our sharing His service with others, the faithful are seen as He said we would be:

*By this all men will know that you remain My disciples, if you may continue to have sacrificial love in yourselves!<sup>5</sup>*

The sacrificial love which He declares shall be among His true disciples is His gift to us. It is His love that was shown when He took our sins, your sins, upon Himself. In them, He died in order to free you to share His gift of forgiveness with others.

This evening, Jesus' Word continues to wash you clean of your sins. He calls you to not refuse His will to carry your sins. This call the Word began anew in you by moving you to remember God's Holy Baptism of you. The Word then returned you to Holy Baptism through Holy Absolution.

Soon the Word will call you to feast in the Faith on Jesus' Body and Blood for the forgiveness of your sins. In His paying your sin-debt, Jesus declares to you that He has paid the entire price demanded to bring you forgiveness of your sins. He has served, and continues to serve you, with perfect sacrificial love. Our text concerning God's service to sinners who would be named by Him, saints, continues:

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<sup>5</sup> John 13:35

*[Jesus], knowing that all things the Father had given into His hands, and that from God He came, and to God He goes, rising from the dinner, placed [His] garments [aside], and taking [a] linen towel, tied it around Himself.<sup>6</sup>*

To those among us who may still be struggling with the biblical reality that the Divine Service is about God serving us first, and then us serving one another, those words paint a clear picture of Jesus' ministry. He Who would, in just a few hours after that meal, have His clothing forcibly removed from His Body, before that set them aside Himself for men who would abandon Him as He walked the Path of Sorrows. Jesus' sacrificial love is declared telling of His voluntarily serving those whom He had gathered to celebrate the Last Passover of the Old Covenant.

As you remember that which He did to pay your sin-debt, you are free to look to the walls of this building. Whenever you walk the Stations of the Cross, you may remember that even as Jesus once took off His own clothes to wash the dust of this fallen world from His disciples' feet, also had them later torn from Him, as Station Five recalls:

*Consider the violence with which the executioners stripped Jesus. His inner garments adhered to His torn flesh and they dragged them off so roughly that the skin came with them.*

Oh, yes, Jesus has paid our debt... to God... and to one another. May the remembrance of Lord's unbroken service of the Triduum continue among us. God grant us His grace to serve one another each year until He comes to gather us with all the saints into His unending Church of glory.

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Lent VI Maundy-Thursday (LSB One-year series)

Exodus 12:1-14; I Corinthians 11:23-32; John 13:1-15 (34-35)

April 2, 2015

*Pastor Michael A. Morehouse*

***Soli Deo Gloria***

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<sup>6</sup> John 13:3-4.

*Translation, 1<sup>st</sup> Draft*

*If I, then, washed of all of you the feet, the Lord and Teacher, also all of you have a debt to one another to wash the feet. For (an) example I gave to all of you that just as I did to all of you, you all must do.<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> John 13:14-15.