

April 13, 2017

### “Love in Service”

Exodus 12:1-4, 5-10, 11-14, John 13: 1-17, 31b-35, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

These three passages bring us to many layers of Jewish and Christian salvation history and traditions. What happened during the first Holy Week is full of imagery and meaning from the Old Testament.

That leads us to the question, “Why did Jesus have to die on the cross?” ... for what and for whom?

The account of the first Passover event seems to tell us that Jesus was the lamb sacrificed. Just as the blood of a flawless male lamb saved the Israelites from the death of their oldest child in each household, Jesus is the Lamb sacrificed and the blood he shed has saved us from death, which the Bible tells us is the consequence of sin that entered into God’s creation after Adam and Eva turned against God. Also as the Israelites were freed from the slavery in the land of Egypt, Jesus, the Lamb sacrificed, has freed us from being slaves to sin and evil forces.

Another layer of Jesus’ death is that Jesus served as both as a high priest, who brought reconciliation between God and God’ people, and also as the sacrifice itself. Adam Hamilton, in *40 Days of Reflection*, which goes with his book, *24 Hours that Changed the World* explains this tradition. (p.165- 167)

What does this all mean to us now? What does it mean that Jesus had to die for us... for our sin? “Sin,” as defined in the original translations of the Bible, means “to miss the mark.” The mark, in this case, may be explained as the standard of perfection established by God and evidenced by Jesus. Viewed in that light, it is clear that we are all sinners.

I see myself in Peter, who told Jesus, “Even though others may forsake you, I will not,” but denied him three times out of fear that had captured him, when a servant girl in the high priest’s courtyard had said, “You are one of his followers.”

I see myself in religious authorities at that time, who wanted to preserve the religious organization and its hierarchy, and the privileges of being in the status quo.

I see myself in Pontius Pilot, who wanted to satisfy the crowd and to keep his neck as a Roman Governor. He washed his hands even though he knew that Jesus, who did not have any recognizable social status, was innocent.

I see myself in the crowd that chose Barabbas over Jesus -- Barabbas who might lead to restore our nation by throwing out the Romans by force and by reclaiming our tax money, wealth, prosperity and dignity by freeing us from oppression... over Jesus, who taught us to love our enemies and forgive those who persecute us.

I see myself in Judas, who was so disappointed with his teacher and with the outcome of following him for the last three years that he wanted to be freed from his teacher and his authority. Receiving 30 silver coins was not the purpose of giving Jesus over to religious authorities.

Seeing myself in those who played the drama of the Holy week, which led Jesus to his crucifixion, I can say that the words in the hymn of his passion and death, "Ah, Holy Jesus," are my words of confession.

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee?

Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee!

'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee; I crucified thee.

Our Lord Jesus, who knew that his time with his disciples would be very short, he took a towel, put it around his waist, poured water into a basin and washed his disciples' feet. Peter objected to it, but accepted it when he heard his teacher say, "Unless I wash you, you won't have a place with me."

Jesus knew that all his disciples would desert him, deny him and even betray him. Nonetheless, or because of it, he washed their feet, kneeling before them.

Do you see weakness in him? Or determination, purposefulness, strength, and love and even trust in his disciples after his resurrection?

He said, "If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example; Just as I have done, you also must do.":

Then he left his last and new commandment. "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love one another."

By washing his disciples' feet kneeling down, Jesus showed us what it is to love one another. It is love expressed in service.

Brothers and sisters, that's what Jesus calls us to do or commissions us to do, on this Holy Thursday night. Just as Jesus loved his disciples until his end and has loved new disciples that have followed, including us who have gathered here tonight, Jesus says, "Love one another."

Loving one another -- that will be the greatest gift we can offer to our Lord Jesus, who gave his life to us in his teaching, ministry and crucifixion on the cross.