

April 6, 2023
Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14
John 13: 1-17, 31-35

Wash and Remember

The end is near. The end of Jesus' time with his disciples. The end of the journey they have been on together. The end of Jesus' teachings, his healing, his ministry. It is the end, even if the disciples don't know it yet. Jesus does. As they sit around the table, enjoying the passover meal, Jesus knows it is their last meal together. So, he will tell them one last thing. He will give them one final instruction: "Remember," he says. "Remember what I taught you. Remember all I did and said. Remember me whenever you eat and drink together. If one of you forgets, help them remember. Help them remember my love, by loving one another."

Jesus wants his disciples to remember what they have learned. And he wants them to remember him. That his life was not about making himself greater than others. His way was not about being over others or above others, making others feel small so you can feel big. Jesus' way was about coming down from your high place, getting off your high horse, and serving others. "Here let me show you," Jesus says. And

Jesus gets up from his seat at the table. And he takes a bowl and a towel, and he begins to wash their feet.

Now, a master would never do this. He would not serve his guests like this. He would have his servants do these kind of things. The kind of things that meant caring for basic needs. The kind of work that was messy or smelly. Like washing someone's dirty feet. Only a servant would do that. Only a servant would handle something so unpleasant, something so grimy and covered by callouses, warts, or blisters. Only a servant be responsible for such a lowly, humble thing as washing feet. Certainly not the master of the house. The master was too important. Too admirable. Too significant to do something so insignificant. Feet are not something a master would tend to.

But this is something I do tend to. Your lowliest parts are not beneath me, Jesus says. Your messiest, most unsightly parts are not beneath my care. And they should not be beneath one another's care. Listen, as I have washed YOUR feet, so you should wash one another's feet. As I have done for you, so you should do for one another. Remember, this is my way. This is God's way. The way that descends to the bottom, to the

lowest point, to the messiest depths of our lives. It descends to care for our worn parts, our cracked and broken parts, our humble and shameful parts. It gives up its place of honor and privilege. It gives up its place above it all and comes down where we are below; so that we may take our place above. This is your way now. It is how you must remember me. This is how you must love one another. By kneeling down to wash each other's feet.

This is the end. The last meal before Jesus will suffer and die. And this is Jesus' last word to his disciples. This is his last word to us. His final commandment is "love one another as I have loved you." At the end, this is the only thing that matters. The only thing that is important or of any significance. It is to love. To act with love. To speak with love. To serve with love. To come down from above to what is below. To embrace what is beneath you. To care for what is humble and unassuming. To pay attention to what others despise or reject. To live life, not as a race to the top. But a descent to the bottom, toward what is the least lovely among us. Toward what is ugliest, poorest and least respected. And remember what our Lord has done. Remember that he has commanded us to do the

same. To wash one another. To care for one another. To come to this table with one another. And share this meal with one another. To remember, this is Christ's body, broken and shared with us. This is his love poured out for you and for me and for many, for the forgiveness of sin. To remember that as Christ came down from his place up above to love us, we must come down from where we are to love one another too. For in the end, in the dark, at the bottom, love is all we will have. Our strength will fail. Our faith will fail. Our hope will fail. But love will not fail. Christ is about to descend into the very depths of death and hell. The very lowest and farthest point from God. He will descend into the utmost evil of the world and its horrible, ugly hatred. To show that even in those places, God is there. Love is there. It is everything. It is the only thing. Remember, Jesus says. As I have done for you, do this for one another. This is how they will know you are my disciples. This is how they will know you are mine, if you come down to where I am. If you serve. If you love no matter what.