

April 14, 2022

A Maundy Thursday Reflection
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake

Luke 22:14-23

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

John 13:31-35

When Judas had gone out to betray him, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ... 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.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Luke 22:47-50

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

Reflection

I think we all occasionally think about what our legacy will be, what our dying words might be. We ponder what's the most important thing we want people to remember about us.

I taught a class in world religions as adjunct faculty for a few years. I remember that last day of class, I always liked to sum things up for the students by saying, I hope what you take away from this class is that we all have more in common than we think.

That loving each other, caring for those who have less, tending to those who suffer and loving the Creator are the most important parts of all religions. I taught them that every religion has its fanatical and it's more progressive element.

I taught them that it isn't religion in and of itself but it's the greed, the insatiable hunger for power and the violent nature of humanity that uses it as a weapon that is the cause of the world's ongoing problems.

I think what Jesus is trying to sum up for the disciples during that last night together with them is what were the most important lessons of his life. He repeats what he's been saying all along. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."

I have studied Christian history at length yet I still can't fathom how we have strayed so far from this simple commandment. I can't believe that anybody is ever barred from sitting at this table with us.

I don't know how people can twist such a simple idea of loving one another into what we see play out under the guise of Christianity today. But I also can't comprehend how the Romans found Jesus, a simple, wise, religious man so threatening that they had to put him to death in such a torturous way.

Human behavior is complicated. But with each generation there is a call for us to reform and evolve our faith. We have been entrusted with this simple message "love one another". Jesus' last and most important lesson. They won't know we are Christians by our doctrines, rules or our creeds, or by our steeples and sanctuaries, nor by a misbegotten sense of superiority. Jesus said they will know us by our love.

He immediately goes out and practices this for himself in the scripture Julie is about to read. When one of his followers tries to defend Jesus and strikes a man in the party who has arrived to arrest Jesus. Jesus says "No more of this" and immediately heals his enemy. The love we leave behind can't be about what other people do to us or for us.

The love Jesus is talking about is the love of God that flows through us and out to others no matter who they are. It is a committed approach to life that takes practice, to live with an open heart both to God and to others, no matter who they are. A prayerful stance that takes courage and vulnerability and it isn't an easy path to trod and you will often find your face down in the dirt after having stumbled by the weight of it.

But the more open we are to God's healing in our own hearts, the more love and forgiveness we will have to give others. It is a great gift to feel the strength of God's healing love flow out of you toward another that you may think of as your enemy. It can be the most amazing thing to stand back and see how things unfold from there when someone is touched by God's grace through you. May we always honor Jesus' death with our life and our loving, the best we can. AMEN

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WE HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH THIS SIMPLE MESSAGE

love one another

JESUS' LAST AND MOST IMPORTANT LESSON.



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- Rev. Susan Drake