

“Maundy” comes from the Latin word, *mandatum*, or mandate. Maundy Thursday is about the mandate or command the Lord gave his disciples, the supreme command about how they should live if they would remain his disciples, his followers, when he was gone. We’re going to talk about that mandate tonight and what it has to do with our walk with God and with one another.

OPENING PRAYER

JOHN 13:34-35: Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

“Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another”: That’s Christ’s mandate, and it’s a pretty tall order. As an illustration of what that meant Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. Remember what Peter said to Jesus when he realized what he was about to do? He said, **“You shall never wash my feet!”** But Jesus said, **“If I do not wash you, you have no share with me” (John 13:8).**

We often gloss over this part of the story, cutting straight to an explanation and innumerable illustrations about what the mandate to love one another looks like. However, I think what Jesus said to Peter in response to what appeared to be his humble resistance at having his feet washed by his lord is crucial to our understanding of how we can fulfill this command.

When I was five years old I had two older stepbrothers. They were eight and ten years old. And they were evil! One day they decided to teach me how to ride a bike. Our driveway sloped down about 50 yards into a pasture, which was fenced with timber, just enough to keep the neighbor’s bull from wandering away.

My stepbrothers put me on the bike and gave it a nice little shove down the driveway, and before I realized what was happening, I was sailing down the hill at a pretty good clip to the pasture where the 1,200 pound bull waited for me just behind the 3-slat fence. That’s when I learned how to ride a bike. I put my feet on

those pedals and made a hard left hand turn inches before that fence and the bull!

The moral of this story is that the best way to learn is through experience. For Peter this meant that he would learn to love other people like Jesus did by first being loved by Jesus.

Jesus loved people in many different ways. There was the Samaritan woman: She exclaimed that he was a prophet after he revealed to her that he knew she had been married 5-times and how the man with whom she lived was not her husband. That may've amazed her at the time, but the really amazing thing was that he did not condemn her. Instead, he revealed to her the true worship of God and that he himself would gladly give her "**living water.**"

And there's the story about the prostitute who washed Jesus' feet with her tears, whom he protected from the religious authorities, and then forgave her sins, and affirmed her as a child of God.

These stories and many others illustrate how Jesus loved others, people whom I'm sure went on to make a difference in their own little corner of the world with the same love.

So back to Peter: Jesus washed his feet as an act of love and service, and it was on that day Peter learned what love and service look like. If he had refused to let Jesus wash his feet, I don't believe he would ever have become the disciple the Lord intended for him to be.

Brothers and sisters, we've got to be filled up with Christ's love to have enough love to share with the people around us.

Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus ministering to people from his heart. He empathized with them. He felt their pain. He met them where they lived.

When I was divorced, I was abandoned and condemned by many, many Christians whom I thought were my friends, none of whom knew the first thing about my situation. But Jesus knew, and Jesus loved me, and he affirmed me as his son through his Word and through my brothers and sisters who did not condemn me,

but who were light for me. And that's why I am able to minister to others today. I know what the love of Jesus feels like.

Peter wrote in his first letter that we should **"love one another earnestly from a pure heart"** (1 Peter 1:22), and that we should **"keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins"** (1 Peter 4:8).

Peter was speaking from experience. You'll remember how he betrayed Jesus on Good Friday, denying him three times. And you'll remember that after his resurrection, Jesus reaffirmed his love for Peter three times. That's why Peter was able to talk about how we must love each other with so much confidence later on. He'd felt the love, he knew what it was like to be washed in the love of his savior, Jesus.

So this is how we fulfill Jesus' mandate to **"love one another"**: Like Peter, like the Samaritan woman, like the prostitute, like so many others, we receive the love of Jesus as our own. When we have personally felt loved by God, then we have something to share.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus loves you so very much that he died for you, he rose from the grave for you, and he will come again in glory just for you.

Do you want to be a better Christian? Let Jesus love you. A better mother or father? Let Jesus love you. A better husband or wife? Let Jesus love you. A better brother or sister, student or worker? Let Jesus love you. And then share that love with another person.

Jesus loves you so much he has blessed the meal we are going to receive at this table in a few minutes, giving us his body and his blood in the bread and wine.

Let us meditate on that love, that love that lifted us up out of the pit of darkness, the abyss of shame, and raised us up into the light of life eternal. When we can receive that love, then we have a ministry, indeed.

Tonight, let us meditate on the power of God's love in our lives, how he loves you just as you are, not as you should be.

Tonight, let us reach into our own hearts for this love and let us find ways to share it with the people around us, perhaps helping with the food distribution tomorrow and Saturday, welcoming the families in our neighborhood into our church.

And too let us share this Good News with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.