

## **Broadcast Message from Pastor Craig Toth on Maundy Thursday, April 9, 2020**

Welcome to the New Mount Vernon United Methodist Church Maundy Thursday Message. We would normally be in church together this evening. We can't do that under the present circumstances.

Today, I learned that between sixteen and seventeen million Americans have filed for unemployment since the coronavirus pandemic began. This is terrible news. I plan to connect what's happening in our country to the message tonight.

Our reading this evening is found in John's Gospel.

### **John 13:1-17, 31b-35 (NRSV)**

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God

has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 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."

### **The Meaning of "Maundy Thursday," Passover, and Jesus' Last Supper with his Disciples**

The word "Maundy" comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, which means *command* or *order*. It's where we get the word "mandate" from.

Maundy Thursday commemorates the night in which Jesus gave his final commandment to his disciples. This was the evening before Jesus was arrested, tried, and crucified.

Jesus used this time to not only tell, but to teach his disciples the way they were to continue after he was gone. His commandment is summarized our reading this evening from John's Gospel:

#### **John 13:34**

**I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.**

**Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. (NRSV)**

It's easy for parents to fall into a trap of telling our children what to do, but not always showing by our lifestyles. This is the "Do as I say, not as I do" error.

Jesus did better than that. He showed his men how to serve, how to love. The most important commandment that Jesus gives is to love one another and love other people. The Gospel message is a message of love. At the beginning of John's Gospel, we know the famous word, "For God so love the world that he gave his only begotten son." (John 3:16).

It's easy to stop right there and celebrate all that God did for us. But, like Jesus' first disciples, we must be ready to do more than spend our lives celebrating what God does for us. We must put Jesus' words into action and live the way Jesus taught his disciples how to live.

When I was in seminary, I took a class designed for students who felt a call to pastoral ministry. It was a small class; there were only a dozen or so students. I'll

never forget the time our teacher, Dr. Bill Quick, told us that it's easy for pastors to get caught up in a "climb the ladder" mentality (seeking bigger churches, better pay, more prestige). He cautioned us against doing that. He told us that instead of climbing the ladder, we should "lift up the cross."

We all have crosses to bear—especially during times like these. There are many challenges our county faces. Family and friends are hurting right now. In the coming days, weeks, and months, we have a lot of work to do. We need God's help to make wise decisions as we go forward.

It's good to keep looking out for one another. I know many of you have your adult children bringing your groceries. Be careful not to touch your face with your hands until you have washed them thoroughly. Be careful not to get around groups of people. Be safe.

I would like to close this evening with two prayers. The first is the Lord's Prayer. I invite you to prayer along with me.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
 hallowed be thy name.  
 Thy kingdom come,  
 thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread.  
 And forgive us our trespasses,  
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
 And lead us not into temptation,  
 but deliver us from evil.  
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
 forever. Amen.

Now, receive this blessing, which is found in the Bible in Numbers, chapter 6.

### **The Priestly Blessing**

<sup>24</sup> The LORD bless you and keep you;  
<sup>25</sup> the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
<sup>26</sup> the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.