

Maundy Thursday – April 17th, 2025
The Hand of the Lord Who Serves and Feed Us

Prayer

Jesus, help us to understand and appreciate how you still serve us today through word and sacrament.

Context

If you will remember from earlier in Lent, we heard from John the Baptist that (John 3:35):

The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

Jesus has all things in His hand. He has our very lives in His hands.

What About Tonight?

Tonight, the hour has now come (John 13:1). John the apostle writes, (John 13:3)

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,

Jesus **knew** that everything was in His hands. He **knew** that He was the only Son from the Father. He **knew** that He was fully God and fully man. He **knew** that He was going back to the Father. He **knew** it all. He **knew** that He was about to be betrayed, on the

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very night when He was about to be delivered into the hands of sinful men.

What did He do with His hands? Did He hold them up, saying, “Stop, stop!” and put a halt to everything? Did He clench His fists, ready to fight for His own life? No. (John 13:4–5):

He rose from supper. He laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around His waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.

Jesus’ hands were capable of great power, capable of miracles upon miracles. What did He do with those divine and holy hands of God? He dressed as a servant and went about washing filthy, dirty feet. Foot washing was an act of service for a people who spend their days walking on dusty and dirty roads and paths. This was typically done by a slave. It was the job that no one really wanted to do. Yet our Lord took up this task! He brought Himself low, all the way to the ground, literally. He took those fatigued and filthy feet into

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His hands. All things have been given into His hands, even the feet of His disciples. And He washes them.

Jesus makes a point to say (John 13:14–15),

*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,
you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have
given you an example, that you also should do just as I
have done to you.*

The lives of His disciples are to model this way of life, a life of real love and service, that Jesus has shown us.

Though washing feet had great cultural meaning for the disciples during that time, it does not carry the same kind of weight for us today. Jesus is not telling you today that you literally have to wash people's feet. Jesus did not wash feet to institute a sacrament that forgives sins. However, this act shows us the Lord's heart for and service to His people. The Lord has given each of us many gifts for the sake of serving our neighbors. Why has the Lord given you this or that talent, time, or treasure? It is so that it might be used for the sake of others! This service does not make you more or less

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worthy before God because of what you do or can do. It is not about us. It is not about our positions, money, status, or education. Nor ought we to think along the lines of “That form of service is below me. I’ll serve on **my** terms in the things that **I** like and want to do.” Your life as a disciple who follows Jesus is in loving one another.

If there was ever anyone on this earth who deserved to be served, it is Jesus (Nicene Creed)!

*God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God,
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the
Father, by whom all things were made!*

But He has done what only He could do, for He is not merely our example. He is above all our Savior! And what has He done? He went all the way to the cross! He gave His very life for you! He suffered. He shed His blood. He died on that cross. All to forgive you of your sins. All to carry our selfish, greedy, and arrogant sin, which deserves only eternal punishment, to the tree of death,

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where He defeated it! He conquered it. By His death, He destroyed death. Jesus (Mark 10:45; see also Matthew 20:28).

*came not to be served but to serve and give His life for
the ransom of many*

He did it all **for you**. He did it out of love **for you**.

As Paul reminds us, our Lord served His disciples in another way with His hands on Holy Thursday. Paul is speaking to a divided people of God who thought their purpose was to be served. He draws them back to the service of Jesus for them. It is the service of Jesus that is also for us. He gave thanks, took into His hands bread, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, (see 1 Corinthians 11:24)

*Take, eat, this is My body, which is **for you**. Do this in
remembrance of Me*

And then with those same hands, (v. 25)

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He took the cup, after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

This is Jesus' last will and testament before His death. These words remain true forever. He served His disciples then. He serves His disciples today.

Now this, this is the Sacrament. Instituted by Jesus, uniting Jesus' words with the elements of bread and wine and delivering this forgiveness of sins! This gift continues. This is the gift of the Lord's service to you that is being offered this night. Jesus is feeding you with His very body and blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

So, we merely take Jesus at His word. "This is My body" means "this **IS** My body." "This . . . is . . . My blood" means "this **IS** My blood." This meal is not about what we are doing but about what He is doing for us! His body and His blood being handed to you is His service to you. It is His love to you.

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This love leads you out from this table to follow Jesus' new commandment to love one another. Having been filled with Jesus, you will go out from here and love your neighbors, especially the household of faith. Use your hands to serve them, to love them, to bring Jesus to them. They need to hear what you know today. Jesus loves them as well (1 John 4:10–11).

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Don't forget. Your love for others is not about you. Having all things in His hand, Jesus served and loved you first. He serves and loves you still. His love never ends.

AMEN