

Maundy Thursday – Year B – The Rev. Canon Joan Anthony – 4.01.21

Today is April Fool's Day. The origins of the day are unknown and unknowable but seem to be both ancient and worldwide. It is the day for playing practical jokes. Today by a strange irony is also Maundy Thursday. This is the day in which we begin the final journey to the crucifixion and the death of Jesus the Messiah. For the world, the events of this day prove beyond a doubt that Jesus and all who believe in the power of God are fools. The Messiah did not bring about the Kingdom of David, instead the Messiah was hung on a cross and died a humiliating and excruciating death. April Fool's.

But for us, who are the faithful, the believers, for us who walk the path of this painful time it is not the remembering of a cruel practical joke, but the re-remembering of our salvation.

It is Thursday, Maundy Thursday, the day in which we re-member the Last Supper the origin of our Eucharist. It is the day when we re-member the washing of the disciple feet, the model of servanthood that Jesus invites us to embrace. Maundy is from the Latin meaning "to command. Today is the day when we are once again brought face to face with the thing that Jesus commands us do. Love one another. But not merely love one another as difficult as that can be but love one another as Jesus has loved us.

Jesus' hour has come, and he is fully aware of what the next three days will entail. He knows full well, as the disciples do not, what is about to happen. The arrest, trial, cross and death are inescapable for him. But we know what is beyond the death of Jesus, we know that the tomb will be found empty. We know what it is to live with the hope of the resurrection. To appreciate that hope, we must walk with Jesus through the days ahead re-remembering. "Love one another as I have loved you." The disciples do not yet know what this means, they do not understand. They will only come to understand as they reflect on what has happened and what it means for their lives beyond the resurrection. We do not fully understand either.

We will only understand what has happened if we are willing to enter into the events to come not as a memory but as a reality here and now in our lives. We are called to re-member, that is to bring back into the present those events that happened in Jerusalem and live them again. Only in doing so will we come to know and understand what that day means in our lives here and now. As John tells the story of that Last Supper and the washing of the disciples' feet. The story is about much more than one night long ago. It is a story not only of then, not only of now but also of the future, all three times at once. This is the story of crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and the story of salvation and judgement. We don't often like to think of the judgement to come, it has become a sort of theological scandal, a hard concept to associate with a loving God and a gentle Jesus. In truth, salvation and judgment go together. You cannot really have one without the other.

But, as John tells the story of Jesus, salvation and judgment turn out not to be what we might in our humanness imagine them to be. Salvation and judgment come to us on God's terms not on human terms. First comes judgment, which is an honest account of those things in our lives which have separated us from God. Those things which we name sin. But then the good news, judgment on God's terms is not punishment but forgiveness. We are judged and judge ourselves so that we can be freed from the burden of separation and sin that weighs on our hearts and our souls. That is salvation on God's terms. We are not saved so much from something as we are saved for something, saved for eternal life and the heaven that awaits us. We are saved because we are beloved of God. God does not want to frighten us into loving as Jesus loved because that is not truly love at all. God wants to forgive us, cleanse us from all that separates us. As a

respected theologian expresses it: "Salvation is experienced in this life and the life to come as forgiveness." As the Body of Christ in the world, we love one another not because we can do so, not because Jesus commands us to do so but because God first loved us, loved us with the self-giving sacrificial love of God.

As you go about the next few days, look at the world and those you meet in a new way as the ones to whom you are called to love as Jesus loves us with the self-giving love of God. You will see those around you, especially those who are not like you with new eyes. What traits in human beings do you find it most difficult to endure? Those who exhibit those traits are the ones who are the most difficult to love. At the same time, they are the ones who we are most expressly called to love. It is in loving those we find least lovable that we come to see Jesus. It is in loving whoever comes into our lives that we come to not only know but understand the command Jesus gives to us. "Love one another as I have loved you."