

Maundy Thursday

John 13: 1-11

April 17, 2014

*This sermon was preached by Pastor Kurt Jacobson at Trinity Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI*

Dear Friends:

On this Thursday of Holy Week, the Christian Church across the world assembles in gatherings like this to recall a meal and a bath of sorts. Normally, we would not make so much out of so little. Eating and washing are just simple, regular, ordinary, everyday tasks. We eat and wash daily without paying much attention to them because they are of casual importance. When asked what we did on a given day, we never mention them; they go unnoticed. We do not normally make so much out a meal and a bath, but on Maundy Thursday, we do.

There are certain occasions when a meal or a bath are important. When a friend is ill, or a neighbor's mother dies, we seal our Tupperware tightly and place a loaf of bread in a basket and pay the ill or grieving person a visit and provide a simple meal. In doing so, we find ourselves extending care and compassion to others in need. A meal can make a difference.

A bath can make a difference – when after having been hospitalized, undergoing days of tests, pricks, and scans, you finally get enough strength and the permission get in the shower for the first time in days. Or after returning home from a week of camping in the wilderness without a bar of soap, or a source of warm water, your family can smell you before they can see you and even the dog doesn't want to come near until you take a shower, a bath makes a difference. In both cases, we recall how good bathing feels – renewing us not only on the outside, but also on the inside. A bath can make a difference.

A meal and a bath, simple things with notable significance. This evening, we sit before the meal and the bath of Maundy Thursday. Jesus sits around the table with the disciples for the last time. They eat and drink and then Jesus breaks the bread, gives thanks, and says, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Then he took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant, the new promise in my blood. Drink of this often to remember me." A meal can make a difference.

Then after dinner, Jesus got up from the table, removed his outer garment, wrapped 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. He said, "You should wash one another's feet . . . as I have loved you, you also should love one another." A bath can make a difference.

Watch this (video) "The Last Supper"

Tonight, my friends the incredible love of God in Jesus is given to you. It comes in a simple meal – a reminder of how the ordinary acts of daily living (like a meal or a bath), touched with divine love, make a difference for us and for others.

So come to the table of the Lord and find the love of God and then go – go back to daily life with the merciful love of God to extend to others. Amen.