

It is an honor to be speaking to you on Thursday of Holy Week. Most of you know that tomorrow is Good Friday: the somber day when Christians remember the crucifixion of Jesus outside of Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago. On the day before Good Friday Jesus ~~instituted~~ ^{instated} two ^{important} ~~things~~ ^{rituals} with his disciples: First, he ~~began~~ ^{instated} the serving of the Communion meal when he broke bread with his disciples at Passover. But instead of looking back to the Egyptian Passover, Jesus ^{also} looked forward to his crucifixion and reinterpreted the Passover meal as a symbolic means to commune with him through his death on the Cross. 2nd, Jesus washed his disciples dirty feet. Now, many Christians call today, "Maundy Thursday," but it is also called "Holy Thursday," "Covenant Thursday," "Sheer Thursday (Shere in this case means 'clean' or 'bright'). In the Maronite and Syriac Orthodox Churches today is called "Thursday of Mysteries." As much as I love ~~that term~~, "Thursday of mysteries," I'll go with "Maundy Thursday,"

Some scholars propose that this term "Maundy" arose from the old French *Mandé*, and therefore refers to 'beggars.' After all, in years gone by, on this day, many of the Christian kings and queens would hand out coins or baskets to beggars. I understand, today, the Queen of England still hands out coins to some of her subjects. "Maundy" is hard to spell-check, because it comes from the Latin word for 'commandment.' ... deriving from the translation of John 13:34 *Mandatum novum do vobis: ut diligatis invicem:.... and so on [sicut dilexi vos, ut et vos diligatis—invicem.]* "Commandment, new, ie. "A New Commandment I give to you: that you love one another. **Just as I have loved you,**" Jesus spoke these words to his disciples, ~~just~~ hours before he would be betrayed, tried, flogged and crucified.

There is nothing new about the command to love: the Jewish Scriptures say it in the book of Leviticus: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Confucius and other moral teachers summoned their followers to love with similar commands.

Most of us can, and do, say, 'You ought to be more loving.' Or "You really should have more love, patience and kindness, shouldn't you!" Well, if we don't say it, we often think it....But few would dare to say "You should love others the way I love you." The new thing in this command is found in the life and teachings of Jesus. He lived a life of unreserved love. He therefore could command without any hesitation or hypocrisy: "You, my followers, love as I have loved you." Many of us tell our friends and family: "Do as I say." Jesus reinforced the mandate with this: "Do as I do." He washed their feet: a dirty job relegated to the lowest of servants. Then, he went to the cross to lay bare the loving heart of God for his wayward children.

When all is said and done, the old ^{Hal David & Bruce Bachelder} song puts the meaning of Maundy Thursday very well: "What the world needs now is love, sweet love; it's the only thing that there's just too little of."

This has been Dan Price for community Comment