

Meditation – A Decisive Night  
Scripture Readings – John 13:1-7  
Maundy Thursday, April 14, 2022  
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Our first scripture reading is John 13:1-7. Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet is found in no other Gospel and takes the place of the institution of the Supper in the Johannine narrative. In doing so, it provides an interpretation of Jesus' death, just as the traditional words of the institution in the Synoptic Gospels do. Hear now, God's holy word on this solemn night.

*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. 2 The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 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. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Amen.*

The title of the meditation: A Decisive Night

Let us pray: Holy God, we thank you for this decisive night as we gather to remember the courageous choice of your son. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, our strength and redeemer. Amen.

As we continue our journey through Holy Week, we find ourselves at a crucial turn in the road. It is a time when choice calls for a decision. The celebration and welcome of Christ's entry into Jerusalem with the waving of the palms has moved into a more intimate gathering as Jesus celebrates the Passover with his disciples. The breaking of bread together and the singing of hymns indicate a night of camaraderie among close friends. The washing of the disciples' feet and the commandment to love one another reiterates Jesus' ministry of service and humility.

However, this is also a night of grief and betrayal. A decisive night in the life of Jesus when he was aware more than ever before that whatever strength he needed in this life to maintain his integrity and to be loyal to who he is and who God called him to be had to come from within himself, from his personal faith and relationship with God. His friends, even though they loved him, could not help him. He was aware, profoundly aware that he stood alone and that the choice he had to make was his and his alone.

Very often the emphasis on this night is the betrayal and absence of support from his disciples who could not stay awake. Perhaps what is more importantly true is the fact that Jesus could not sleep! It was his road of sorrow -- his Via Dolorosa... Would he be faithful and complete the journey of sacrifice? Would he partake from the cup of suffering? On that sleepless night, he asked God if there was another way and when God said no, Jesus took the traitor's kiss, the soldier's spit, the bile and venom from the princes of religion, and then he went on again in faith toward the cross.

Jesus concludes his Lenten journey as he began it. Alone! He was alone in the temptation of the wilderness, and he is alone in the sorrow of the garden. These are the moments in Christ's life when he is the most human. And likewise, these are the moments in our lives when we are most aware of our humanity, our vulnerability, and our need for a loving and gracious God.

When our life journeys take an unexpected turn and we find ourselves alone in the valley of the shadow of death, we can walk with courage in faith, not only because we believe that God is our Savior but also because our Savior walked this way.

When we are children, we learn that Christ died on the cross to save us from our sins and this is theologically correct. However, the more of life we experience, the more we come to appreciate the meaning of Holy Week and Christ's road to Golgotha.

He didn't travel this path to save us from traveling our own roads of sorrow but rather to show us how to travel these roads and to encourage and strengthen us along the way of life that calls us time and time again to give up a part of ourselves in order to grow --- our illusions, our wishes, our securities, our biases. Christ calls us to the way of life that understands the cup of salvation---the cup of "new life" is also the cup of death. We cannot drink from one without partaking in the other. The two are inseparable even as our joy and our sorrow are intimately woven together.

The Holy Week journey captures the heart of our faith, the heart of what we believe...that there is life after death, yes, but also that life's journey is a series of deaths and rebirths, of sacrifices and blessings, of sorrows and joys, of walking alone and walking with friends.

And when we find ourselves at a crucial turn in the road, alone, in our own decisive night, may we have the courage to make choices that reflect the love and integrity of the One we call Lord and Savior, the One who invites us to partake of this solemn meal on a Holy Night. Amen.