

Living Lent | Day 38, Maundy Thursday

The Power of Christian Service

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. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied 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 that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

"Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if

you have love for one another.”

John 13:1-17, 31b-35 RSV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

Christian service must be an expression of God’s divine love and mercy. It is easier to serve with selfish or ulterior motives. It is easier to serve close friends, or those we are seeking to impress. But what about those who mean us harm? What about those who are not our “friends”? What about our enemies? Are we still able to serve and love them with the same zeal and enthusiasm?

Consider Jesus’ example. In this scripture, Jesus having had supper with His disciples, displays for His disciples one of the greatest acts of service recorded in scripture; He washes their feet. This simple act of kindness becomes extremely profound when one considers the fact that Jesus performed this service after the devil had put it in the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Him. Imagine being Jesus for a moment, knowing that Judas would betray you. Would you have been able to serve Judas in love and with kindness? I know that it would have been a very difficult thing for me to do.

The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian Church, tells them that without love they are nothing (1 Cor 13:2). This God type of love Paul wrote about is called agape. What separates agape love from other types of love, is that this love is not dependent on reciprocation. It is a love that is fully existent and need only be found in the person expressing it. It is a love of the will. The governance and expression of this love does not depend on how someone behaves or on how someone treats, or even mistreats you for that matter. This love is purely a decision to love. Nothing else matters.

Although Jesus knew Judas’ plans, He still served him, without hesitation and without reservation. In fact, later in this same passage Jesus tells His disciples that they must exercise a new type of love; a God type of love. This would be a new commandment (Jn 13:34). This would be the defining quality which would distinguish who they were and whose they were. By this, Jesus told them, everyone will know that you are my followers, because you are displaying this this type of love (Jn 13:35).

During this season of Lent, let our acts of service embrace this type of love. As we contemplate the finished, effectual work of our Savior and Lord by offering Himself as the sacrifice for the sin of the whole world; let us remember, that just as He was undeserving of the agony He endured so we are undeserving of the resultant benefit of His grace. In Christ, God chose to love us. God chose to save us. God chose to serve us. God made these choices, not because we deserved it, but because He is God. Let us therefore go and do likewise.

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

Reverend Paul S. McKenzie, Sr. is the Pastor at Bethel Evangel Community Church in Brunswick, Georgia. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Rev. Franklin B. McKenzie (Reverend Paul’s Father) was led to establish a place where people could meet to learn about the saving power of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and to worship

God the Creator. Under the direction of Reverend Paul McKenzie, Bethel Evangel is continuing to grow numerically and, most importantly, spiritually.

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