



Living Lent | April 6

Ex Tenebris Lux

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."...

"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 (NRSV)

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

Maundy Thursday is a rich day on the Christian calendar. It is the first day of Tenebrae (Latin for “darkness”), the three days prior to Easter which find the light and life of our Lord Jesus gradually dimming through betrayal, scourging, crucifixion, death and burial. But even in those dark and painful moments, Jesus was teaching with both his lips and his life. Maundy derives from a Latin word for “commandment.” And on Maundy Thursday, Jesus left three commandments or ordinances for the Church which help us overcome the darkness.

The Commandment to Serve - Taking a basin of water and a towel, Jesus washed his disciples’ feet as a humble expression of sacrificial service to others. He said, “For I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:15) Jesus came to serve and commands us to do the same. We are never more like Jesus than when we are sacrificially serving.

The Commandment to Remember - It was on Thursday that Jesus gathered with his disciples to observe the Jewish Passover in obedience to the commandment that it be a day of remembrance (Exodus 12:14). Taking bread, he said, “This is my body” and lifting a cup, he said, “This is my blood.” And so, he left with us a lasting church ordinance to remember his sacrifice. It is called different things - the Lord’s Supper, Communion, the Eucharist - but all observed in obedience to “Do this in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25)

The Commandment to Love - During this same evening, Jesus said to his disciples, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another . . . By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13: 34-35)

What is to be our response to these commands? Jesus once said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.” (John 14:15) Today, his commands are to serve, remember his sacrifice and love. While Maundy Thursday saw Christ begin steps toward the approaching darkness, Easter Sunday was coming as Jesus Christ burst forth from the grave in glorious light! A cry of the Reformation was Post Tenebras Lux - “after darkness, light.” The Reformation sought to bring the light of scripture, grace and faith to a church that had dimmed. This is a dark world in which we are living. Even so, what a force of light the Church can be as we seek to obey Jesus’ commands to serve, remember His sacrifice and love one another. Ex Tenebris Lux! “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:3)

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

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