

MAUNDY THURSDAY / DIES MANDATI

Text: St. John 13:1-15, 34-35

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✱ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

“The SON of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Therefore He *“made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross.”* JESUS came to serve and to cleanse, to give Himself over to the wrath of His FATHER in our place and pour out on us, and into us, the Blood of the *“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

What JESUS was about to do is clearly seen in the events of this holy night. He, who, in less than twenty-four hours, would give up His Body and Blood upon a cross, would in the upper room this night, give His Body and Blood to His disciples *and* His Church. He, who on the morrow would give up His life for the life of the world, would in the Upper Room this night, foreshadow that great act of love by taking on the role of a slave and washing the feet of those for whom He was about to die, that they be washed in His Blood.

The great Jewish feast celebrating Passover, the night the Angel of Death came for all the firstborn in the land of Egypt while the firstborn of God’s people were spared by the blood of a lamb—a night of blood, terror, and death—was at hand. That night our LORD JESUS was preparing for His exodus from this world, for He *“knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the FATHER.”* He knew His hour had come and He knew exactly what that hour entailed. He knew because it was His FATHER’s plan. So He prepared to be *our* Passover Lamb through whose Blood His people would be spared and escape eternal death.

JESUS knew that He would be struck down and His little band of disciples scattered. He knew they would fail and desert Him in His hour of greatest need. They would flee from Him and even deny they knew Him. Forsaken by man and God, He knew that He would go to the Place of the Skull and there face death alone. He knew there would be no compassion, no mercy, or love for Him. JESUS knew that He would be betrayed with a kiss and He knew from whom that kiss would come.

We know too, or at least we think we do. We know that JESUS was handed over to the religious authorities and eventually to the Romans, by one of His very own—by the disciple, Judas—for thirty pieces of silver. We are disgusted at such a betrayal. We knowingly shake our heads in wonder at such evil treachery. After all, *we* would never do such a thing.

No, we would never think to ask, *“LORD, is it I?”* We would never think to ask such a question because we are thoroughly convinced that we would never betray JESUS. Nor would we ever desert or deny Him. Really?

Repent! It is you! It is you. It is I. It is all of us! We have betrayed JESUS *“in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.”* We have not done as He has taught us. We have not done as He has asked of us. We have not loved the LORD our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind and we certainly have not loved our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.

Instead, we lie and cheat when we do not think we will be caught. We look the other way while our friends, children, and grandchildren turn their backs on God and His Word. We keep our mouths shut and do not speak the truth because we do not want to rock the boat. We do not want to make waves. We do not want to lose our friends or risk driving away our children and those we love. We are quite willing to betray JESUS for the temporary pleasure of *their* approval not realizing that they will be damned for eternity. Yes, we are quite willing to betray JESUS to be honored by men.

We betray JESUS when we grudgingly pinch our pennies, being no better than Judas who stole money from the disciples' purse, instead of giving our offerings freely to the LORD with a grateful heart. We betray JESUS when we decide that we have no time for worship, but we always seem to make time to entertain ourselves, our family, and our friends. We betray JESUS when opportunities for Bible Study are offered, but we decide we do not need to attend because we have convinced ourselves we already know it all, or at the very least, we are convinced we know more than our pastor.

We betray JESUS when we say we believe in His Word but vote for men and women who approve of and support abortion. We betray JESUS when we say we believe in His Word but vote for men and women who celebrate and praise homosexuality and transsexuality as though such sexual perversions are harmless. We betray JESUS when we say we believe in His Word but vote for men and women who openly oppose Him and His Word seeking to expunge JESUS and His Word from public discourse. We betray JESUS when our children live in open sin outside the bonds of marriage and we say nothing, but pretend everything is all right.

Repent! We have all betrayed our LORD with a kiss while we chase after the myriad mistresses with which the world tempts us. We are faithless friends, cowards in the battle when it counts, disgruntled and spoiled children with the murder of JESUS as our legacy.

But there, in the Upper Room, despite knowing all that was in store for Him, despite knowing all the ways with which He would be betrayed, JESUS girds Himself as a slave and washes the filth from the feet of His betrayers. JESUS knows all that will shortly take place and still His compassion is for His disciples—and for you. *“Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”*

JESUS cares not a whit for Himself. His heart is set on His disciples. His heart is set on you. He knows that He will accept the scorn of the world that you would have the FATHER's love. He will die alone that you would have the company of heaven. You see, this is the will of His FATHER, for He does not desire the death of a sinner, but would have all men be saved. In this, He has loved you to the end.

Because JESUS has loved you, because He will love you to the very end, He has made you His own. He has made you His own and with the bloody waters of Baptism, He claims you. He gives the water that flows from His pierced side. Living water that He gives so that a man might never thirst again and with which He bestows His Holy Name. With this water, JESUS washes the filth of self-indulgence, self-pity, self-importance, and self-righteousness from your life. He forgives you your betrayals, even as He forgives you your little faith.

Thus, JESUS also gives you His Body and His Blood. He feeds you with the Bread that came down from heaven to satisfy your hunger for righteousness. He offers you the Blood that dropped from Him like beads of sweat in the garden and the Flesh that was nailed to the Cross as the perfect love that never ends. He gives you the same Body that left behind the shroud and napkin in the empty tomb and ascended to God's right hand. JESUS gives Himself, His life, and His love, for and to you. JESUS takes away all your foul sins and, in their place, gives to you His righteousness, His forgiveness, and His peace.

JESUS fulfills the promise of the first Passover with His death. With His Blood, painted on the doorposts of your heart, death passes over you. It can no longer harm you. With His Blood, JESUS has made you His own, a *“chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people.”*

So,

*Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain, sinners ruined by the Fall;
Here a pure and healing fountain Flows to you, to me, to all,
In a full perpetual tide, Opened when our SAVIOR died.*

*He that drinks shall live forever, 'Tis a soul renewing flood.
God is faithful; God will never Break His covenant of blood,
Signed when our Redeemer died, Sealed when He was glorified.*

Come. Do not inquire of JESUS, *“LORD, is it I?”* It is you, but that is the reason He has come, and that is the reason He gave His life. So, come, do not ask, do not speak, just listen. Listen and hear Him say, *“I have lived, died, and rose again for you, that you will be forgiven all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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