

Maundy Thursday ~ Year A
March 20, 2008
The Reverend Amy Morehous

Maundy Thursday Service

“Radical Change”

So we've come together – as a community – we've stopped what we're doing – we've paused for a brief time in the hustle of our daily lives – to share this time together. We've shared a meal – we will share together in remembering Christ's last night before his crucifixion – in the serving of those he loved, in sharing of bread and wine. But what we're really sharing and celebrating tonight is change.

Change – something that makes people uncomfortable. It certainly makes Peter unhappy. When Jesus takes on the role of the servant and begins washing the disciples' feet, Peter protests. To wash the guests' feet was the job of a good host – but it was a menial task, one usually done by the host's servants – not by the host himself. Jesus is turning the normal social order on its head by taking up a towel, and bending over his disciples' feet. Peter tries to be helpful; he reminds Jesus that he's not doing it correctly. He's reminding Jesus of his proper place – trying to keep things status quo. Peter doesn't understand what's happening, but he knows something is changing around him, and he doesn't like it.

Jesus tells Peter – “If I can't serve you, then you can have no part of me.” Jesus is changing the rules – again. He who is last will be first. To lead, you must be a servant. “If you want to follow me, you must do as I do – take up your towel and follow me.”

For the disciples, it is already a night to enact a radical change of the past...they are gathered together for the night of Passover – gathered to remember the night in which God stepped in and radically reordered the story of the people of Israel. Re-ordered it so much that it changed their whole system of marking the passage of the year. Time itself means something different after the night of Passover. God says to Moses and Aaron, “This month is for you the first of months; you shall make it the first month of the year.” It had been the seventh month – the middle of the year. Now the night of Passover is to be the beginning – the point from which all things will be measured for the Hebrew people.

For us, too, tonight is a beginning. A change. A radical re-envisioning of the kingdom of God, and of our place in it. Jesus says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 13.35 By this all will

know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” A new commandment for us all – even if you have heard it a thousand times before, tonight let Jesus’ words be just that for you - a new commandment

Because, tonight, God radically reorders our lives. Tonight, Christ will freely choose to sacrifice himself for us – he will change the course of the world’s salvation history, all with the power and depth of his love. “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” Jesus’ radical act of love changes our lives, changes how we understand the very fabric of who we are. We are a people of love, sent forth to do the same. This is a firm, everlasting love – God’s love - not the transience of the human heart, the syrupy hearts and flowers we write songs about, and celebrate on Valentine’s Day. This is an all-powerful love, a love that sets captives free, that moves the immovable object...the love that changes hearts and casts out fear, the love that defeats even sin and death. No matter where we are, no matter where we have been...we are given that love freely, by God, and we are sent forth in that love as disciples of Christ.

Even now, there’s a whole world full of people who think they are unloveable, who think they are beyond the power of love to work in their lives. You may feel, sometimes, like one of those people. Our loving service, our caring hands, our full hearts, can help show people that no one ever falls beyond the reach of the love of God.

Outside these church doors, you will find a world that hungers for change, even as it fears it. You will find a world that thinks that love is weak and transient, that love is powerless against the many faces of evil. You will go forth from here, in the name of the love that is Christ Jesus, and show the world that this love, this radical, new, life-changing love, is the ultimate power, the lasting engine of change, the very wellspring of all our hopes. May you be borne up by that love, even through the grief and despair of trial and betrayal, and the pain and suffering of death. Even when days are darkest, there is always the beacon of that radical Resurrection love, the love that changes everything, that triumphs over even the darkest of nights. May that love – God’s radical, life-changing love – be in your hearts and minds, tonight and always.

Amen.