

***Holy Thursday Meditation***  
**March 29, 2018**  
**North East United Methodist Church**  
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*Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter \*said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean." So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.*

-John 13:5-17

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*v. 5 - "Then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."*

Jesus, the Son of God, the Alpha & Omega, the Prince of Peace, knelt down and washed the disciples' feet...it was an act of agape love, unselfish and sacrificial...it was a glimpse of the still greater act of love to come...when Christ would wash each of us clean, wash our sins away, by spilling His blood, by sacrificing His life on the cross...

At the foundation of this sacrificial love is a willingness to die to self...Jesus models this attitude...*"less of me, more of God"*...dying to self, living for others, living for God...

Shortly after Jesus knelt and washed the disciples' feet, Jesus knelt once more in the garden of Gethsemane. In the Gospel of Matthew we read that Jesus took Peter and two other disciples with Him to pray. He left them and went off into the garden by Himself and the scriptures tell us that Jesus was *"grieved"* and *"distressed"*...Jesus is quoted as saying to His disciples, *"My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death..."*

Throughout most of my life, when I've thought of Jesus I have not thought of Him as *"grieved"* and *"distressed"*...I have often pictured Jesus at peace...His face resolutely set for Jerusalem...complete trust in His Heavenly Father...not anxious but calm and in control...

But the scriptures tell us, Hebrews 4:15, *"This High Priest of ours, Jesus, understands our weakness, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet He did not sin."*

Jesus was fully divine, but also fully human. Perhaps we see Jesus' human side most clearly in the garden of Gethsemane...Jesus was "*anguished*"..."*grieved*"..."*distressed*"...

You and I have been there haven't we...we have been "*anguished*"..."*grieved*"..."*distressed*"...the whole world has been "*grieved*" and "*distressed*" as it awoke this past year to terrorist attacks, school shootings, and political scandals...

Many of us have been "*grieved*" and "*distressed*" as we have heard the news that a loved one has died, as the doctor calls us into his office and speaks the word "*cancer*," as the bill collectors continue to call, as we struggle and fight to defeat the addiction that has held us in its grip for so long...

You and I have, like Jesus, been "*anguished*" and "*distressed*"...but I have realized that I have handled and continue to handle my anguish and distress quite differently from how Jesus handled it...

When I experience "*anguish*" and "*distress*" my focus turns inward...perhaps some of you can relate...suddenly my focus is on - What **I** can do to fix it; how **my** feelings have been hurt; how someone has wronged **me**; how **I** can make it better; how **I** can be stronger.

When Jesus experienced "*anguish*" and "*distress*" His focus shifted away from Himself.

We read in the Gospel of John that Jesus knew His time had come to depart from this world, that He would soon have to leave those He loved in this world...I can imagine His sadness as He sat at the Passover meal and looked around the table at the disciples He had traveled with for three years, the disciples He had grown so close to, knowing He would no longer be able to walk and talk and laugh with them....so what does He do in this moment of "*distress*"...He shifts the focus from Himself to them and He kneels down and washes the disciples feet...He serves them...He loves on them...

It was the same in the Garden of Gethsemane...Jesus tells the disciples, "*My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death...*"...what does He do...first He asks others, His disciples, to pray for Him...and then He shifts His focus off of Himself to His Heavenly Father..."*My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done not mine.*" Jesus died to self...

This is what Jesus was trying to explain to Peter. Look at v. 6-8..."*So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, 'Lord, do You wash my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I do you do not realize now, but you will*

*understand hereafter.' Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!"*

Peter protested...He didn't understand...Jesus wasn't simply giving Peter a model for service...Jesus was symbolically pre-enacting His greater act of sacrifice that was yet to come.

In order to be saved, we must be washed by Jesus; we must allow Christ and His sacrifice to spiritually cleanse us...to cry out like the psalmist, *"Purify me from my sins and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."*

Jesus replies to Peter, *"If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."*

Washing someone's feet is a very personal and intimate thing. If you've ever had someone wash your feet, you know how revealing it feels. Having someone touch our feet is personal, intimate...it causes us to be vulnerable...to give up control...

Jesus taught His lesson two-fold that night...by His example of kneeling down and serving the disciples, AND by calling the disciples to make themselves vulnerable, to give up control, and to be willing to be served...The lesson...

## ***We must die to self.***

As John the Baptist stated, "*He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.*"

So often when we are feeling "*anguished*" and "*distressed*" we turn to self, we fight harder, we try to figure it out...so often we focus on our selves, our needs, our wants, our hurts...So often we tell God what we are comfortable doing, how we want to serve Him, who we feel like loving...

Oswald Chambers writes, "*Even the weakest saint can experience the power of the deity of the Son of God, when he is willing to 'let go.'* But any effort to 'hang on' to the least bit of our own power will only diminish the life of Jesus in us. We have to keep letting go, and slowly but surely, the great full life of God will invade us, penetrating every part. Then Jesus will have complete and effective dominion in us, and people will take notice that we have been with Him."

This is what Jesus modeled when He washed the disciples' feet...what He modeled with His life and sacrifice...what He prayed, "*Not my will, but yours be done*"...what He taught...Luke 9:23, "*If anyone should come after me, he must DENY himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*" We must die to self.

On Tuesday mornings, a group of us are studying Billy Graham's book, The Holy Spirit. In his book, Graham states, "*The most basic question any Christian can ask is this: Who is ruling my life, self or Christ?*"

Graham calls on us to pray, "*Lord, I am Yours, to be used in whatever way You want to use me. I am at Your disposal, and You may do with me whatever You will. I seek Your will for my life, not my own will.*"

Decision by decision, moment by moment...Christ calls us to turn from self to God...especially in moments of "*anguish*" and "*despair*"...to let Him lead...to become less and less so God may become greater and greater.