

Today we remember the Last Supper that Jesus had with his disciples in which he instituted the Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist. The Lord's Supper was instituted in the midst of the Passover meal which was in remembrance of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. Three meals are running simultaneously: the first being the Passover meal, the second, the Lord's Supper which Jesus is having as a farewell meal with his disciples, thirdly, it is in the midst of that meal Jesus established the Lord's supper. We also remember the agony of Jesus at Gethsemane and the betrayal by Judas. We call this day 'Maundy Thursday' from the Latin word '*mandatum*' which means 'mandate' or 'commandment'. The new commandment (*novum mandatum*) that Jesus gave them was to love one another as he had loved them. In John's gospel we see that Jesus while having supper gets up from his place and ties a towel around his waist in order to wash the feet of the disciples. The job of washing the feet of a guest was given to the lowest of the slaves. But here was Jesus doing just that. When Jesus approached Peter, he vehemently opposed Jesus washing his feet. Jesus reminds him that if he would not allow him to wash his feet then Peter would have no part of him. When Peter heard that, he answered, 'Lord after you wash my feet, wash my hands and my head too.' Jesus then tells him that the one who has had a bath is already clean and needs only to wash his feet. But he told Peter that not all of them were clean.

After Jesus had finished washing their feet he asked them whether they understood what he had done. He reminded them that they call him 'Lord and Master', and he, their Lord and Master had washed their feet. He had done this as an example so that they too would serve each other as he had served them. Jesus shows the full extent of his love through suffering and service. Immediately after the Supper, one of his own disciples would betray him with a kiss and he would have to suffer and die at the hands of the Scribes, Pharisees, Chief Priests and the Romans.

In the midst of the Passover meal Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper to remember his great sacrifice on the cross where his body was broken and his blood shed in order to purchase us and redeem us from our sins. We celebrate the Lord's Supper reminding us that Jesus gave up his own life for the sake of the world. He was a man for others. He challenges his disciples with this new commandment, 'Love one another as I have loved you.' The way Jesus loved them was by taking their place on the cross so that they may experience salvation. As followers of Christ we are also challenged to love others as Christ has loved us – meaning that we should be willing to give up our lives for the sake of the gospel and for others. The hallmark of Christian discipleship was to be LOVE. Jesus said by this shall all people know that you are my disciples if you love one another as I have loved you.

Finally, as part of this service we also celebrate the Love-Feast. To eat together is one of the great signs of fellowship with one another, and this is especially true of our fellowship in Christ and also of our anticipation for the final banquet which we will have when Christ returns. Eating together breaks down all kinds of social barriers and allows us to see each other as individuals made in the image and likeness of God. As we participate in the feet washing, the Lord's Supper and the Love Feast may God truly help us to serve others, to know that Christ has died for our sins and to love others.

May God flood us with his love that we will be able to love others as Christ has loved us.