

The state of the world, this Holy Week and Maundy Thursday have my soul in a very somber place. Yet I know Sunday is coming. A litany-like interpretation of this gospel reading has haunted me, it invited me to follow the trajectory of Jesus's journey. That journey strengthened my faith and trust in God. I invite you to walk the journey with me.

WHERE IT STARTED

About 2,028 years ago Jesus broke into the world as a carpenter's son.

We know little about his early years; as a child he stayed behind in the temple to learn from the rabbis.

Later he began to teach in the synagogue, some were amazed and others wanted to throw him off a hill.

He became an itinerant preacher.

He was baptized by his cousin John and proclaimed by the Holy Spirit to be the Son of God.

Then he gathered a motley crew of followers inviting them by saying, "Follow me."

He retired to the desert to pray.

He went to a wedding and turned water into wine

As he moved around, crowds began to follow him

And crowds began to grow

He fed thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish

He promised the kingdom of God

He saw the people suffered under Roman rule

He ate with tax collectors

Conversed with women

Healed the sick

Raised the dead

Called out the Pharisees' hypocrisy and complicity

Then this day came - the day he knew the oppressors had enough.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN

“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”

His own are those who he knew and loved;

they had embraced God's gift of Jesus;

they were his disciples.

He gathered them together for a meal,

during the meal he began to wash their feet.

Peter refused and Jesus insisted.

Unless I wash you, you have no share in me.

Through me washing your feet I bind you to the Father.

Peter offers his hands and head as well,

but Jesus responds: “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet. . . you are clean . . .”

Jesus washes the feet of all the disciples – even though he knows that one of them will betray him.

Jesus tells them, his time with them is coming to an end:

Little children, I am with you only a little longer.

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 should love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,

if you have love for one another you are my disciples.

There is more in this woven together reading; the things left out are for tomorrow or another time.

We are meant to focus on the love this reading is about.

WHAT NOW?

Jesus operated in an age of rulers who ruled with brute strength, oppression and violence.

Jesus demonstrated that he came to rule with service, liberation, and love.

Today we are invited to consider the depth of love that Jesus manifested. We know that Jesus paid the ultimate price for challenging the powers that be and for turning things upside down. But the love that Jesus embodied is **grace**, not sacrifice. Jesus' gave us his life because he lived fully, putting no boundaries and restrictions on his love for all humanity. Jesus was sent to teach God's people how to live; it was the process of teaching that got Jesus in trouble, not our sins. Jesus had already told Peter that he is clean and later Jesus says, "You are already cleansed by the words that I have spoken to you."

We are extremely close to being in the same situation as the people of Israel were over 2000 years ago.

In order to change what is happening we need to follow Jesus. He's already been here, we are expected to be Jesus's hands, feet, and voice. In our time we can look to Bishop Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Ghandi, and most recently Alexi Navalny as people have carried that torch. I'm sure there are many more such saints.

We need to find ways to resist the brute strength, oppression and violence that is being inflicted on the world and we need to do it in service, liberation and love.

How do we hold the tension of resistance and love? The best answer I can offer is to embrace our baptismal vows, especially the one to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

The invitation for us is to start from a posture of love. Whatever we do sincerely will please God.

We can resist by protesting, praying, striking, speaking truth to power.

When protesting we can carry a sign that is positive. *Lord, guide our leaders to mercy and justice.*

When praying we can soften our heart toward the person inflicting pain.

When speaking truth to power we can be civil.

If enough people do any of these often enough, the tide will turn.

On Sunday we were asked if we are up to the test that our current situations pose to us. I believe we are. May you be emboldened for the test having walked with Jesus who came to teach us how to live.