

Sermon For Maundy Thursday, April 13, 2017 - "God in an Apron"

Maundy Thursday
April 13, 2017
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

God in an Apron

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

Macrina Wiederkehr shares this reflection in her book Seasons of Your Heart:

Supper was special that night
There was both a heaviness and a holiness
 hanging in the air
We couldn't explain the mood
It was sacred, yet sorrowful.
Gathered around that table
 eating that solemn, holy meal
 seemed to us the most important meal
 we had ever sat down to eat.

We were dwelling in the heart of mystery
Though dark the night
Hope felt right
 as if something evil
 was about to be conquered.

And then suddenly
The One we loved startled us all
He got up from the table
And put on an apron.
Can you imagine how we felt?

God in an apron!

Tenderness encircled us
 as Jesus bowed before us.
He knelt and said,
 "I choose to wash your feet
 because I love you."

God in an apron, kneeling
I couldn't believe my eyes.

I was embarrassed
 until his eyes met mine
I sensed my value then.
He touched my feet.
He held them in his strong hands.
He washed them.
I can still feel the water.
I can still feel the touch of his hands.
I can still see the look in his eyes.

Then he handed me the towel
 and said,
“As I have done
so you must do.”
Learn to bow.
Learn to kneel.

Let your tenderness encircle
 everyone you meet.

It seems I've stood two thousand years
 holding the towel in my hands.
“As I have done, so you must do.”
 keeps echoing in my heart.

“There are so many feet to wash,”
 I keep saying.
“No,” I hear God's voice
 resounding through the years
“There are only my feet
What you do for them
 You do for me.”

Tonight, in the beautiful rituals of Maundy Thursday we experience a God who comes to us in an apron.

God in an apron who cleanses us of our sins, kneels to serve us, and feeds us a meal of his love.

Tonight, in so many ways, Jesus shows each of us how deeply we are loved. We need to know that we are loved if we are going to follow Jesus' command to love others. We need to know that we are loved if we hope to make a difference in the world.

Sometimes we diminish the importance of knowing that we are loved by God. It can feel like too simple a message - something we're supposed to grow beyond; or just warm and fuzzy - a Hallmark card sentiment without any teeth or meat; or private and individualistic - a word that keeps us focused on ourselves, ignoring the rest of the world.

Yet love creates powerful change within us, and within our world.

Author Zora Neale Hurston said, "When you know that you are loved and you are living in love it forces your soul to crawl out from its hiding place."

When we forget that we are loved, we do end up hiding.

We feel inadequate and ashamed; we want to hide our smelly feet, our broken lives, our very selves from Jesus' gaze and tender touch.

We get judgmental about others and isolate ourselves from them.

We become afraid that there isn't enough - not enough time, energy, or resources; we grasp and hide what we think is ours.

We become overwhelmed by all the feet there are to wash - all the needs in the world - and we seek to shelter ourselves from all of it.

When we forget that we are loved, we end up hiding.

But, "when you know that you are loved and you are living in love, it forces your soul to crawl out from its hiding place."

So, Jesus puts on an apron and loves us.

He doesn't let us hide. He takes hold of us - warts, stinky feet, callouses, wounds and all. He cleanses us, offering words of forgiveness that echo down through the ages, that are spoken to us in worship.

He kneels before us, making his very body and blood vulnerable and available to us.

He is present to us in tangible, physical ways - at a meal he prepares for us. He says, yes there are so many in the world in need of care and you too are in need of kindness, of love.

He gives us a new command that guides us when we feel overwhelmed by the brokenness of the world. He says you also should do as I have done to you: bow, kneel, serve, love as I have loved you. Let your tenderness encircle everyone you meet.

And when we despair that "there are so many feet to wash," Jesus' voice comes resounding through the years, "No. There are only my feet. What you do for them, you do for me."

He gives us a focal point - don't look at all the feet, look at him.

In all of these ways, Jesus' love gets us out of our hiding places and into a love for the world. This love creates powerful change, within us and within our world.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.