

Sermon for Maundy Thursday, March 29, 2018 - “Stripped and Re-remembered”

Maundy Thursday
March 29, 2018
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus, God’s love made known.

At the end of worship tonight, the altar will be stripped. It will look empty, naked, bare.

Each of us knows what it is to be that empty.

There are times when life suddenly strips us bare. We get the awful phone call, a betrayal is exposed, death strikes out of the blue.

Other times, the stripping happens to us through a thousand paper cuts: The barrage of devastating news stories, bouts of insomnia, chronic health issues, that same old argument erupting yet again. All those things drain away our energy and joy.

We know what it is to stand bare like the altar, empty like trees in winter.

The altar tonight and the Psalm that will be chanted as it is stripped: these both assure us that Jesus knows what it is to be stripped bare. He was betrayed - his friend denied knowing him. Before his death, Jesus was stripped and beaten. He even felt forsaken by God. Jesus knows what it is to have relationships, dignity, and life itself stripped away.

When so much can be stripped away from us, our instincts are to preserve what we have, to secure our life and our energy. Yet on this night, by his own example, Jesus calls us to a different way of being - to cease our futile efforts to preserve ourselves and to instead give ourselves freely to one another.

On the night when he himself was betrayed, Jesus took off his outer robe and put on a towel. He chose to strip himself of power and authority. He let go of his role as teacher and took on the role of a servant as he knelt to wash the feet of his friends. Jesus calls us to do the same - to let go of power and privilege in order to serve and love others as we have been loved. Jesus was able to surrender his power and authority because he knew how deeply he was loved by God. And, now Jesus loves us into freedom from bondage to self-preservation. Compelled by this love, we can release our hold on our own lives trusting we are held together in God, trusting that in Holy Communion we are re-remembered - put back together in love.

When Jesus shared his last supper, he said, “do this to remember me.” We often hear that as, “do this and think of me.” Yet, the English word is helpful here - re-remember also means to put back together. In Holy Communion, Christ is re-remembered as we are made part of his body. As we share Christ’s body and blood, we are brought into his body, made members of his body.

This means that no matter what happens to us, we are not left empty or forsaken. Instead, we are part of the body of Christ where we are re-membered - where we are put back together again in love. We are part of Christ's body that even death cannot destroy, that is raised up to new life on Easter Sunday and every day.

We are part of Christ's body that is held in God's love now and forever. Because we are held in this love, we can freely give of ourselves in love for others.

Tonight, as we share in Holy Communion may we know that whatever stripping, whatever emptying, whatever is to come, God's love remains. And, we will always be re-membered in love.

Let's take a moment for prayer and reflection.

