

## **Meditation: Do You Know What I Have Done for You?**

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**Scripture: John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

Do you know what I have done to you? As with virtually every verse of scripture, this question is posed differently in various translations. Most recently in the NRSV(ue), it reads, “Do you *understand* what I have done *for* you?” Jesus poses this question to his disciples at a pivotal time. His public ministry is ending. He is turning his attention from the many he has served in the wider world to the few who are gathered in that room. As John’s gospel tells it, this is occurring on the day *before* the Passover, rather than on the festival of the Passover. John, we know, likes to do things a bit differently. This gospel doesn’t tell the story of the last supper as the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, do. Instead, John shows us a Jesus who is focused on service and love at “his hour,” after an ordinary meal during an ordinary time.

We have gathered this evening at an ordinary time. Perhaps you’re joining us after your dinner. Maybe you rushed here and hope Pastor Jessica doesn’t go on too long, your tummy is grumbling! Easter and spring break mean that many of us arrived here with to do lists, work stresses, and plenty of other distractions. But amidst all of that, we’ve made space to join together here, on Holy Thursday, to ponder the mystery of Jesus’s last week, to place ourselves at the foot of the cross and consider Jesus’s question: Do you understand what I have done for you?

Jesus is often associated with baptism and the institution of the Eucharist, two pivotal moments in his life that are not mentioned anywhere in John’s gospel. Before Christ’s arrest, John gives us this scene: that at “his hour,” Jesus is serving the twelve, even the one he knew would betray him, and giving them one final commandment: that they love one another as he has loved them. Simple enough, I suppose. A man known for service chooses on his final day to serve others. One who is known for his love and care of all God’s creatures shares the message, “Love one another.” But amid this wondrous, intimate, perplexing moment we are also left to ponder a question: Do you understand what I have done for you?

Well, do we? Do we fully understand what it is that Jesus's life, ministry, and death actually mean? Many believe they do. I've spent much time in seminary, as a pastor, and before thinking about this question and I have to say that even I don't fully understand. I know a great number of retired pastors who will tell you the same. I'd wager that anyone who tells you they fully comprehend what it is Christ has done for us is probably kidding themselves. I think our scriptures, particularly the gospels, are as varied as they are because one of the goals of our faith journey is the journey *itself*. We're not supposed to understand fully. If we were, maybe Jesus wouldn't have spoken in such murky parables or would have given a bullet-pointed list of just what we need to do.

As Paul indeed tells us in his first letter to the church at Corinth: now we see through a glass darkly. Only later, after this life, will we see face to face. In other words, friends, you're off the hook from a full understanding of these astonishing, mysterious events. Jesus wasn't expecting it. For all Paul's admonishments, it seems he wasn't either. "Do you understand what I have done for you," Jesus asks. Not fully, no; and that's okay.

One of the gifts and challenges of Holy week is to let the text tell the story: at his hour, rather than have himself washed, Jesus washes the feet of others, modeling a way of loving service. Jesus puts aside all other concerns and chooses, on his last night of freedom, he washes the feet of his disciples. What was Jesus doing in that moment? What does his death and resurrection mean to you?

You don't need me to answer these questions. You need me to point you to them and let you sit and wrestle with them. What we're left to ponder on this holy evening, then, is Jesus's selflessness even to his enemies, big question, and one final commandment to love. It was said that Mary, after the miracle of Jesus's birth, "pondered these things in her heart." As we move from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday, from meal and service to cross and death, let us take the posture of Mary and ponder Jesus's question: "Do you understand what I have done for you?"

Amen.