

When we gather for Holy Communion, we “*do this in remembrance of Jesus,*” and that is important. But we do well to ask *what it is* that we remember when we gather to break the bread and drink the wine. That Jesus once lived and gave us the very best example of how we ought to live -- before he was executed by those in power, unfortunately and unfairly? Or something *more* than that, deeper and more powerful?

The lessons for Maundy Thursday all have something to say about “*remembering:*” “Do this in remembrance.” So, just what are we remembering? In our first lesson from Exodus, we hear about the story of the first Passover; God’s action to spare the Hebrew people from death and deliver them out of slavery in Egypt. Here we have the original image of a “*Lamb of God,*” whose blood smeared on the doorposts saved the people from death. This picture of God’s saving action is remembered at Passover, which this year begins April 22; a remembrance is built into the question-and-answer ritual of the Seder meal that marks the ritual of Passover. *We* join in remembering this when we call Jesus “*the Lamb of God.*”

Our second reading from I Corinthians 11 includes the familiar words from our Communion liturgy, “*Do this in remembrance of me.*” What about this “remembrance?” It assumes a community gathering together for Holy Communion, both in the moment and through the generations.

As Trinity celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, you are remembering some of those events and values that have made you a unique and blessed community of God’s people. As I work on my family’s genealogy, I’ve been able to receive and pass along stories from previous generations. A cousin recently emailed me some fun and fascinating pictures from my mom’s family, passing along images and stories that reach back through our great-grandparents’ generation. It’s good to remember.

In our lesson, Paul is passing along to the Corinthian church what he received “*from the Lord.*” The word “tradition” means passing something along, something meaningful and shared that helps to create and sustain a community. In a sense, this remembering is, literally, *re-membering* the Body of Christ gathered around the table, the font, and the Word, and sent out into the world.

Why remember the *death* of Jesus? Why repeatedly proclaim the Lord’s death? We remember the establishment of a new covenant sealed by the love of Jesus that went all the way to death on a cross for us. Covenants connect the covenanters to each other, and *covenant* was the way God’s people throughout history have understood their relationship to God. Our Gospel tells us that Jesus loves us to the end, all the way into the depth of human darkness, even up to his dying breath. This is how God deals with the vice-grip of sin, and here is the basis for our new connectedness with God –our *new* covenant. There’s another point I want to remind us about: we remember his death -----*until he comes!* Death was not his end; those words “*until he comes*” proclaim a hope for resurrection life, now and promised in God’s future.

Our Gospel text from John 13 calls on us to *remember* that new commandment: “*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*” How has Jesus loved us? In the Gospel of John, unlike the other Gospel narratives, this meal in Chapter 13 is not “the Last Supper, a Passover which is given new meaning.” The timing is different because it highlights a different image of Jesus. In John, the Last Supper happens the day *before* the day of preparation, so that Jesus himself is pictured as the new “Lamb,” dying the next day at the same time as the lambs who were killed as part of the Passover ritual.

We remember the servant love of Jesus, this highly exalted Jesus, as we see that he takes on the lowliest job of foot washing--where have those feet been?--profound loving through service. We presume that Jesus also washed the feet of Judas, who, we are told, *was* there among the disciples with Jesus. I wonder how *that* went over. Jesus knew what Judas was planning to do, yet Jesus didn’t cook up a plan to avoid it. “He loved *all of them* to the end.” Loved His own, who were in the world. A dreadfully messy, and all- too-often deadly world.

How accurately do we remember what we remember? The text shows us that “*misremembering*” is quite possible—even, at times, quite likely. Simon Peter is one example. He is working from the usual rules of our human existence – he honors Jesus for having a *higher status*, and so of course it isn’t proper for the one of higher status to be doing the lowly task of foot washing. Jesus turns away from those assumptions, as he goes on to tell them: “*You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.*” Later, you’ll be able to remember this right. What happened “later” will make the difference in being *able* to understand this loving action of Jesus. That –what happened later-- is precisely why we are called on to remember Jesus’ death. It will make the crucial difference in understanding Jesus. (The word “crucial” is linked to the word for “cross.”)

Remembering is more than just recalling, just knowing the idea of it in our heads, or being able to recite some words from memory. Jesus says, “If you know these things, are you blessed if you do them.” Moving from *knowing* to *doing* brings the promise of blessing; *blessing*—not rank, not status, not wealth or self-righteousness, for these are not the things that Jesus held onto for himself, though he certainly could have done that. But that wasn’t who he was. The *How* of remembering is bound up with the *Who* of remembering. “Doing these things,” following the example of Jesus, means humble service for the sake of the other. Your love for others thrives within the remembrance of God’s love for you.

When life seems to have handed us more than enough pain and suffering, defeat and despair, we need to be remembering Easter. But even as we remember and trust the hope and renewed life of Easter, we also need to remember that on Good Friday, it was precisely that “sin, death and the devil” of our earthly struggles that Jesus took into himself. Easter says that no matter what things seem to be, all those scars of human brokenness and abuse are not the last word. God took them all on—took them all into himself— at the cross; their ultimate power in this world and in the next died along with Jesus. Easter says God has something *infinitely better* in mind.

Jesus says he will no longer be with the disciples in person. For those who first heard John's gospel, this is what they had to face, and, well, we do too. We can go beyond merely remembering that Jesus lived here once a long time ago. Jesus stays alive and active in this world through the Community gathered in his name, the Body of Christ following that mandate of Maundy Thursday. *Love, as I have loved you.* By this love, everyone will know that you are my disciples. This "*new commandment to love and serve*" is the GPS for following Jesus. This love, God's eternal surprise when the tomb came up empty on Easter morning, allowed Peter to begin to understand the foot-washing Lord. What then is our reason and resource for following Jesus? Remembering, knowing, and doing this: "*Just as I have loved you, so, love one another.*"