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 A Sermon for Maundy Thursday  
 St. Alban's Church, Sinking Spring, PA  
 March 29th 2018

In the Name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Throughout the Gospels, there are many questions as to who Jesus really is.

When he was born into the world, many came to greet him as the one whom the prophecies foretold, the young child that would lead the people of God, the true light coming into the world.

When he began his ministry, he quickly drew a following and more titles -- John the Baptist called him the Lamb of God; many thought him to be a prophet; still others were threatened by his miracles and words, wondering "who is this who can forgive sins?"

Some saw him teach, others saw him feed the multitudes, and a few here and there even believed him to be the Messiah, the Son of the true and living God.

Along his path, he knew he had to set his face towards Jerusalem, and telling his closest friends about the journey they would take together, he told them that he would soon face suffering, being handed over to the authorities and to be lifted up upon a cross. Even so, once he reached Jerusalem, he gained another title, an unlikely one -- the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

Throughout the Gospels, there are many questions as to what this Jesus with many titles is really all about, and he often had to help people understand this Kingdom of which he was the true King. When people questioned him, he would often point to something within God's creation to illumine the truth of the matter -- that the kingdom of God was like a mustard seed, at first small but then growing and expanding so that it became a home for many creatures. Or the kingdom of God was like a sower who planted seed, with some falling on rich soil that would help the seed prosper.

Both Jesus' many titles and numerous parables help describe what he and the kingdom are like. Yet on the night before he died for us, when he knew that his hour had come, Jesus took on a significantly different role, his most important role that expanded on every title he bore and every parable he told, a role that perhaps best showed his disciples what his life and what the life of God's kingdom was all about -- Christ became a servant.

This may have been a confusing night for the disciples -- for why would this man they came to know as their Lord stoop down to the lowest and most menial task of washing their feet? Wasn't this dirty and grimy chore beneath him? Peter goes as far as to say "You will never wash my feet." But Jesus was showing him a new way -- "unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Foregoing parable or analogy, Jesus himself became the example, washing his disciples' feet in a simple but intimate act to show his friends that the most important aspect of life in his kingdom is self-giving love. As he says, the disciples are right to call him Lord and Teacher, but these and all of his other titles did not prevent him from humbling himself into action. The love that compelled him to act as a servant is the same love that he not only asks us to emulate but commands us to continue: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

Because on this night, no mere analogy would do. No parable would show his disciples how to serve one another. No title would be enough to convince them how to love one another. And no analogy would help them understand that the bread and wine he gave them was the beginning of the greatest act of love this world has ever

known -- for the body and blood that he gave them in bread and wine would be the same body broken and blood spilled only one day later for the sake of their lives and the life of the world.

Tonight we will continue in those things that he asked us to continue. Any who choose to may have their feet washed as a real and present reminder of how Christ came into the world to serve, not to be served. And then we will celebrate the Eucharist, sharing Christ's body and blood broken for us.

This night, remember especially that when Christ wanted his followers to know something, he told them a parable -- but when it was time for them to *become* something, to become people who choose to serve, to become people who are self-giving, to become people who love one another as he loved us, and to have a share in him and to be joined with him in a holy mystery of service, sacrifice, and love, he gave them his body -- the same body he offers to you in remembrance of him. May we receive his body with the same courage and faith that it took him to give it -- and then may we stay with him this night, keeping watch and walking in his steps to the cross that became for us the instrument of the salvation of the world.