

WELCOME 1st April 2021 – Maundy Thursday '21 B

Mark 14:12-24 & Psalm 22

Barney For the 1st decade of this century...that purple dinosaur & his friendly little song...*I love you. You love me. We're a happy fam-i-ly. With a great big hug & a kiss from me to you. Won't you say you love me too?*...dominated the children's mkt...It was cute & clever & all that kid's TV & mktg ever is...but it perpetuated a myth about love...it fostered the misunderstanding that love is always warm & congenial – reciprocal & receptive – a two-way street of laughter & light...We know better...

“As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take it, for this is my body.” And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And he said to them, “This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many.

Greater love, Jesus had said, has no one than to lay down their life for their friends. Greater love is broken body & shed blood...Greater love this world will never see.

The flip-side of love is not it's opposite...hate or apathy...it's the power to make love real And that power is **GRACE** for the unlovely & unloving...grace for the unworthy & undeserving...grace for those who would soon betray...deny...abandon the One who loves w/o limit.

In Jesus, the flipside of love is not betrayal, denial or abandonment...but grace that is far stronger, more enduring, & gives all who betray, abandon or deny, a place at his table...a home in his kingdom...a Father who welcomes today & forever.

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus...on this night when your covenant is written in blood for us, help our slow dull hearts to be fully alive to how you loved us by your death & how you love us now in your resurrection glory.

By faith & grace, eliminate our excuses for loving poorly. Draw us quickly to repentance when we fail our neighbour, & in the same moment, you.

Open our eyes to the full extent of your love for us & the wide expanse you create in our hearts for those around us, that we might love more fully to your glory. We pray, in the kindness & wonder of your beautiful name. Amen

MAUNDY THURSDAY '21 B – THE FLIP SIDE OF LOVE

“I tell you the truth, one of you eating with me here will betray me.” That’s what he said. No explanation ...clarification...apology...As the Passover meal begins...^{b/4} they can draw their hearts too deeply into the remembrance & experience of God’s redemption from slavery in Egypt...they’re stunned by an accusation none want to acknowledge.

Betray...a word that burns deep. You don’t expect to get undercut, undermined, blindsided, betrayed by someone you trust...someone you love. It’s cruel. It wounds. “On the night he was betrayed...” But there it is...Jesus, friend of sinners companion of the outcasts, ally to the lowly & least...God in the flesh...betrayed by one close to him...so close their hands dipped in the same bowl...so close they knew each other near as brothers...so close they could speak freely in each other’s company...But this “Am I the one?” I find it telling Mk records **that** question on the lips of the 12...“Am I the one?” Perhaps living so close to Jesus for 3 years had taught them something after all. Perhaps they finally began to understand the nature of their own sinfulness. Perhaps they finally were beginning to see that in a different time, different place, or under different circumstances, it could be any of them...“Am I the one?”

You see; **SIN** acc to the Bible is *us* curved in on *us*. Sin is incurable self-interest – unrestrained self-centeredness – no holds barred selfishness. Sin is the on-going state of human brokenness in which what we say & do to tilt the world in our own favor fractures our relationships on every level...^{w/} those we love, ^{w/} those we hardly know, ^{w/} the earth around us & sometimes even our own bodies. Sin is as natural to us as breathing...& that is devastating...& deadly...& it kills us.

Which is why Jesus over & over had pointed to this night...of betrayal & denial & abandonment & suffering & death as the unavoidable necessity for his life. He must become a ransom or we’re all lost. He must surrender to sin & death or we’re all dead...forever. He must suffer so we can be healed for eternity.

“Am I the one?” Of course...you...me...every one of us...Which is why the new covenant HAD TO BE in his blood. The new covenant of forgiveness was the heart of all Jesus said & did & promised God was about...Grace is Jesus knowing the ugly truth about each one of us & loving us in a way no one else can...loving us in a way that completely recreates who we are & what are lives are about...loving us into the newness of his image in you/me. Forgiveness is Jesus loving you so much that nothing gets in his way as he pursues God’s best & highest desires for you/me. Life in the Father’s presence forever...the way of abundant life...the joy of the Father’s presence & the pleasures of living ^{w/} him forever.

John tells us that on the night Jesus was betrayed by his friends & denied by his friends & abandoned by his friends he sat & washed the feet of his friends. With the towel of a servant, he washed their feet & said that unless you let him wash you, you can’t belong to him. To belong to Jesus is to be bathed in his grace, forgiveness & love...to be loved in your dirtiness. So you can pretend your feet don’t smell, you can keep them covered, & wear new socks but in the end Jesus knows & says let me wash you ^{w/} my love & you will be clean indeed.

The flip-side of love is not its opposite...hate or apathy...it’s the power to make love real. The flip-side of love is **GRACE** for the unlovely & unloving...grace for the unworthy & undeserving...grace for those who would soon betray...deny...abandon the One who loves ^{w/} no limit. Grace means that God does not see us through the lens of the mistakes we’ve made...our betrayals denials or abandonment. Grace means God works nothing less than reconciliation & healing in each of us. Grace means that, even if we can’t always see it, God is forever redeeming our garbage – managing to somehow bring redemption out of even the biggest messes we make.

Grace means sin is not the last word on your life or mine...Your sin is never bigger than God’s ability to redeem you. You are simply not the sum total of all your mistakes/magnificence. You are who God says you are. His child. Your garbage & your virtues will go to the grave ^{w/} you but the forgiving, gracious love of God in Christ will redeem you from the grave.

The Bible says; “God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” John says this: “This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us & sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.” And he handed bread & wine – his body & blood – the bread of life & the meal of forgiveness & eternal life to Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Thaddeus, & Judas... Wait...Did he just say Judas? Grace is Jesus knowing the ugly truth about each one of us & loving us in a way no one else can...

Tonight all that matters is that love...Love that forgives sin & embraces even death so that God’s good desires can come to pass in you & me...love that is laid down for us & for the world...love that sets the pattern & course for us. As Jesus lays down his love in death, we find our death destroyed. As Jesus lays down his love in death our sin is forgiven. As Jesus lays down his love in death that his power is unleashed in us ^{w/} strength enough for the challenges of today & his presence for all of our tomorrows. In Jesus, the flipside of love is not betrayal, denial or abandonment...but grace that is far stronger, more enduring, & gives all who betray, abandon or deny, a place at his table...a home in his kingdom...a Father who welcomes today & forever.