

“When Jesus Tells You What to Do”

April 18, 2019

Shadow Savior series – Holy Thursday

We gather because Jesus tells us what to do. For centuries, people who want to follow Jesus gather in this Holy Week after praising Jesus on Palm Sunday and before celebrating resurrection on Easter Sunday. We gather because we have to walk through the whole week with Jesus – even unto death. There’s no getting around it. We must go through it. And when we gather, Jesus tells us what to do.

I don’t love being told what to do, especially if it’s not what I have in mind. So I wonder how these friends of Jesus felt when the shared Passover meal took a different and unexpected turn. Jesus was changing the script that they knew. He’d told them what to do before, but this was different. First, the announcement of betrayal and then taking the simple bread and wine and talking about his own death. There was more to the story – not just about how God had saved the Hebrews and freed them from slavery – but Jesus says this is about him – his body, his blood, sacrifice and love.

And it’s more than just telling; he shows us what to do. John tells us of Jesus washing feet – taking on the posture of a servant to the amazement of his friends. If they still had any hope that Jesus would take over and be a mighty victor against the Romans, this turn of events surprised them again. Perhaps Jesus continued to disappoint them and their dreams even as he tried to prepare them for what was ahead.

Maybe it seemed like a show of weakness to wash their feet. I’ll confess, I don’t love dirty feet. You can ask my kids – I send them right to the tub if they come in with muddy or sandy feet. So washing feet is a challenge. It’s dirty work and certainly not work for their teacher and master to do. Tonight we acknowledge the power in Jesus’ service to them, but maybe we even struggle with the call to serve, the call to humility, the call to trust, and the call to understand what Jesus has done for us.

I struggle with the call to love as Jesus loves me, to love others as Jesus loves me, especially as I respond to the grief of friends who have lost loved ones too soon, the tragic news of harm done to innocent children, the chaos and uncertainty in our government, the pain in the church, the evil in our hearts, and all that is laid bare as we enter into this time with Jesus.

Friends, we’re in the Upper Room together tonight. Look around. You and I are friends of Jesus, and he’s telling us what to do – and why to do it. So God help us pay attention.

This is a picture of heaven and earth coming together in a moment of grace. Jesus embodies the love of God when he offers the bread and wine – a sign of God’s

grace in our midst. He models servant leadership, and reminds us that service is not optional in the Kingdom of God. It is foundational. It is intentional. It is who we are called to be. It the new command that Jesus gives us – not to judge others, not to figure out their sins, not to focus on their failures – but to love one another.

Everyone was welcome at the table – even those who would soon turn away. Everyone is welcome at the table – even as we struggle to walk with Jesus through this night and into tomorrow. Grace abounds even more than we think, even more than I can imagine. And Jesus tells us to take and eat, take and drink, wash each other’s feet. So this isn’t just about hearing what Jesus says, but doing what he says. When Jesus tells us what to do, it’s not just about the action, but even more about the motivation behind the action – to love as he loves us. May God help us.

Let us pray...PRAYER of CONFESSION