



e - Votion

Wednesday April 16, 2014

Deat Friends,

Today I am reading John 13:1-17

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered "You do not know now

what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash MY feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord-- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

I love this Scripture. It reminds me so much of Bishop Ray Chamberlain washing my feet and my colleagues' feet as we prepared to be ordained. I think it was his way of reminding us that we are to be servants as Jesus was a servant. It also reminds me of all those summer nights we had to wash our feet before we went to bed because we had been playing outside ALL DAY barefoot. :) Those were wonderful days.

Acts 20:35 reminds us that Jesus said "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is more powerful and more meaningful to wash someone else's feet than to have your own feet washed... How wonderful it was for me that the Bishop washed my feet.



In the church we have many opportunities to give as well as receive. Not only is our weekly offering a reflection of our giving, but our volunteering at the church, our giving to missions like our food pantry and the Melting Pot are just a couple of the many ways we give. All across the years the church has agreed with these words of Jesus and given each of us many many ways to give. As faithful Christians, we understand that we are *servants*, following the example of the One who loved us so much that he served us by giving his very life.

I think that it is more blessed to give than receive and it is also much *easier* to give than receive. When we are used to being on our own, independent, taking care of ourselves, we find it difficult to ask for help. Peter Gomes was the chaplain at Harvard University and he once told a story of his early preaching days. He taught at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, and was often invited to preach in the small, rural, black church in that area. He was an outstanding preacher and the churches often took up a love offering to thank him. He said, "Early on I refused these offerings on the grounds that these poor people and their church needed the money more than I did, since I drew a salary at the university" and he loved to preach. He mentioned this to one of the deans at Tuskegee, and she said, "Who are YOU to refuse to accept the gift of these humble people? You have insulted them by refusing to let them do what they can for you." It can be more difficult to receive than to give.

We have some of our saints in the church who have given much to First UMC. Active in church their entire lives, they have served tirelessly and selflessly to God and to our congregation. I am thankful for those of you I know and I am thankful for the saints who have made this church what it is today. We have numerous people that I cannot even begin to name who have visited the sick, loved the babies, organized meals, folded bulletins and newsletters, even tackled a few somewhat "difficult" Sunday school classes from time to time.

How blessed we are by these gifts through the years! I wonder if there are ways to thank and give back to the many people who have influenced our lives with their gifts. A card, a prayer, a phone call, an e-mail, to our saints might be very meaningful.

Peter, and maybe the other disciples too, protested when Jesus took a towel and basin to wash their feet. They loved and respected Jesus and didn't understand why he would wash THEIR feet. They wanted to serve him. And that is how we are.

Jesus knew how difficult it is to be a disciple. No matter how many good thoughts we think; no matter how many nice things we say; no matter how many good deeds we do, the world wears us down from time to time. The grace we receive is as great as the grace we give. We don't know how to truly give until we learn how to receive.

The grace of God is so evident in this passage from John. Jesus laid down his robe just like he would soon lay down his life on the cross. He washed the disciples' feet and he gave himself for us.

So many times we want to get by in life all on our own. Jesus reminds us that whatever power we possess for Christian living is not our own--it comes from him. "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

May we be generous in our giving, and when the time is right, equally gracious in our receiving.

Prayer Concerns:

- Some of our saints who have given so much are struggling now and need our prayers:
- Carrie Denny, thyroid surgery today at Franklin Woods
- Evelyn Williams, at Franklin Woods with a serious infection
- Elizabeth Bailey is now home recovering and continuing to take IV antibiotics for a serious infection.
- Jane Eddy has been diagnosed with breast cancer, is undergoing tests and preparing for surgery and subsequent treatment. (Prognosis is excellent)
- Other prayers that are in our hearts. God knows the need.
- We are still trying to recover financially and are watching our spending. Our fixed costs (payroll and facilities primarily) are very high which does not give us much room to wiggle. Please prayerfully consider your giving and give as you are able. We have great ministries taking place and want to continue to make disciples for Jesus Christ!

Calendar:

- We are in the midst of the holiest week of the year. Please keep the church in your prayers.
- Maundy Thursday service 5:30 fellowship supper, fellowship hall; 6:30 Worship service (Tenebrae-service of shadows)
- Good Friday service 12 noon in the sanctuary
- Easter prayer service 7:45 followed by breakfast, Sunday School and Easter celebration at 10:30
- No Sunday evening activities.

"Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words." St Francis of Assisi

Blessings,

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