

"Body and Blood" John 13:1-17 Passion Sunday 2024

Tonight believe it or not is probably my favorite Church service of the year. To me, in this one special evening, through the Scripture readings, one can see most clearly the Hand of God at work throughout the history of the world.

Tonight, we recall the history of the Passover in which God's hand leads the Hebrew people out of the bondage of slavery through the blood of an unblemished lamb. Tonight, we recall the history of the Last Supper in which God's hand leads the disciples/you and I out of years of slavery to sin and evil through the body and blood of another spotless Lamb—the Lamb of God—Jesus the Christ!

Tonight is one Holy Night when the Sacraments—the mysteries of God's working Hands—come together in the Holy Communion/Passover and Holy Baptism/The Washing of Feet.

However, just remembering does not do justice to the events of the Passover and the washing of feet during the Last Supper—saving events—that have ongoing, present significance for us believers right now today.

The passages of Scripture assigned for Holy Thursday press beyond recollection of what happened, to re-presenting them to the searchers of Jesus Christ today. They are not elaborate instructions to simply serve as reminders of the past. They are real events that have new and fresh meaning to every generation, now and in the future.

That is the daunting task that lies before me this evening—to re-present the Hand of God's work and re-create the event in a new and meaning manner, so that the occurrence may become real, and you too will actually experience freedom from the slavery of sin and darkness.

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First, we need to travel back some 4000 years to a time much different than today, and yet not so different. The Hebrews a small insignificant nation of sinful people had fallen into slavery due to circumstance.

God repeatedly had to lovingly chastise His people for their wayward hearts. Tonight's reading is no exception to that. The Lord gave Moses more law to write down, and the people said they would do what was written. Of course, we know they didn't. Moses sprinkled blood on the people – the blood of the covenant that God made with His people. God gives the people a foretaste of the blood to come. The work of God's hands is revealed.

Now we fast-forward 2000 later and 2000 years ago, where the work of God's hands in the Passover is re-created in a spectacular manner. Here the spotless, unblemished Lamb is the Son of God.

It is now the hands of Jesus that take the bread, break it, and offer it as his body. It is now the hands of Jesus that hold the cup, bless it, and share it as his blood. Because it is the last night before those beautiful hands have nails driven clean through them for our sake and for the sake of a broken world.

It is these loving pierced hands of Jesus Christ offering you and I his body and blood through the bread and wine—promising you and I deliverance from the bondage of sin and darkness.

But like the Hebrews, some of us have lived in slavery for so long that we have no idea things could be any different. Others may have longed for this freedom, but figure God has forgotten about us, or worse yet, doesn't care.

God did not forget about you, and better yet God does care about you. Slavery to sin and evil is not the way life is meant to be.

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So, God comes to live among us in the person of Jesus in way that cannot be explained and becomes that spotless unblemished Lamb.

With his blood spread on the doorposts of our hearts we can be released from the bondage of slavery, pass to safety through the waters of baptism, and set out for a new life of freedom, strengthened by his body and blood.

And yet we still do not follow the commandments given from God's holy hand. We deny and flee from the pierced hands of the spotless Lamb. One would think enough is enough, but God's love is unconditional. Jesus right before his crucifixion ties a towel around himself and begins to wash or baptize the disciple's feet.

He washes even Judas' feet, the one who betrays, he washes even our feet, the ones who still betray. Jesus washes or baptizes the dirt of sinfulness out of our filthy lives once again, so you and I do not have to exist in bondage and slavery to the evils in the world.

The hands of Jesus that washed the disciple's feet are not only a kind and humble act of forgiveness. The hands of Jesus that washed the disciple's feet are a sign, a sacrament if you may, of how we are to live.

It is a visible action joined with a new commandment that we are to love one another just as Jesus has loved you. These are holy hands commanding that we serve one another with humility every single day.

The hands of Jesus breaking the bread and pouring the wine are not only a last meal of remembering and a time of fellowship. It is a meal for the ages and the gift of Jesus' very self, his broken and bloody body each time tasting like love and forgiveness.

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Folks the Hands of Jesus are holy hands. The hands of a savior! The hands of God! The amazing thing is the work of God's hands comes not when we are at our best but when we are at our worst—always, always granting us freedom from whatever holds us in slavery and bondage.

Those nails that pierced the hands of Jesus are not only the cruel consequence of an innocent person dying at the hands of a sinful world. It is how you are saved!

Those found with the blood of the Lamb on their hearts will not be found dead—the angel of death will pass over. Thanks be to God for the hands of Jesus on this holy night. Amen.