

Sermon preached by Revd Rachel McDougall

St Paul's Canterbury

Maundy Thursday

9th April 2020

He loved them to the end, loves us to the end.

He loved them to the end.

This night he shows them how much he loves them.

He stoops down at their feet, down on his knees, to wash feet.

He serves not just the special ones but all of them.

He knows of what they are made, of human frail flesh.

He loves and washes the one who betrays, the one who denies;
the ones who scatter in fear.

He loves them in gentle touch, and in the washing and wiping.

This love is not mere words, but in actions, in gestures that speak
louder than words, that linger long in memory.

In the telling of this story this night we remember once more
Jesus' love for us, a love that kneels at our feet, reminded once
more that service too is sacrament.

This is just the beginning of the end of loving for Jesus.

This loving and serving continues all the way to his death.

And in all of it he reminds us the command that is ever new – the
command to love one another.

We enter these great three days physically apart, remote from
each other.

We might long for loving touch right now and to see one another.

We enter these days with the fear of contagion over our heads, afraid of what we cannot see, aware of the pain and loss many feel in our world today. There are many who know the loss of jobs or activities or even being community in the ways we were used to.

The tables are turned in our lives, the upheaval is real.

Yet Jesus himself, the word made flesh knew upheaval, felt the loss of all that was dear.

Yet he still walked his way and loved to the end even to the letting go of his life.

As we hear these words tonight we are part of his own.

We are also among those whose feet he stoops down to.

Imagine Jesus there looking up at you in love, caressing and washing your feet.

We are also among those called to do the same for others, to love to the end and back again, to love on our knees in helping each other.

We may not be able to touch each other physically today. We may not be able to wash each other's feet here tonight.

Yet we can still touch each other in how we care.

We can show love for our fellow human beings around us, as well as those who are part of this community of faith.

We can love with kindness, with notes left in letterboxes, in phone calls and practical help.

We can hold each other in love and prayer until this passes over us, for we are all in this together.

One of our parishioners shared this story of love with me this week. She'd managed to lock her phone and was at a loss as to what to do.

She went out to the letterbox to find a slip of green paper with these words written on it.

Hi, we're your neighbours and if there is anything we can do, shopping, walk the dog or anything else please give us a call. So she did and a father with his 12 year old son came around, both wearing gloves at appropriate distance and the 12 year old boy unlocked her phone, talking her through how he did it.

This was such a blessing and grace and love.

When we experience something like this we remember that we are loved to the end.

When we love others, God's love is there.

We are loved to the end and back again.

A good thing to remember in these days. Amen.