

*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. 2The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper 3Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5Then 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. 6He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10Jesus 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." 11For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." 12After 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? 13You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. 14So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.*

*34I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*

He took the bread of his last meal, the last meal of a condemned man, and he gave it to them. He took his last taste of wine, the feeling of exhilaration the alcohol would cause and gave his cup to them.

Then he washed the dust off their feet. He talked to them, prayed for them, sang a hymn with them - then he marched off to the place of his betrayal.

He shared his bread and wine with friends who would fall asleep when he asked them to watch with him. He shared his bread and wine with followers who would run away in fear rather than stand alongside him. He gave his last meal to Peter who would say he never knew Jesus, and with Judas whose kiss would place Jesus in enemy hands.

Then he washed the dust off their feet, dust and grime mingled with the sweat of a long day, the smell of a long day. He washed their feet and told them to be like him.

We think we are going to find life in seeing the most marvelous sunset, tasting the finest wine, waited upon by an attentive waiter in a marvelous hotel near sunny sandy beaches, or near ancient cathedrals, or in exotic settings. We flee to mountain paradises, or into wooded

retreats. We imagine joy that will be ours in clothes that will turn strangers' heads, or cars quiet, powerful sleek. Life will be mine with a stereo that will bring an orchestra into my room, or a bass reproduction that will vibrate in the very center of my soul.

But Jesus gives his last meal away and when he might have demanded at least a decent backrub from his friends, he washes their feet instead. And says, "Be like me."

"A new commandment I give to you, love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

A family member cares for one who is dying, washing and dressing and feeding and listening, exhausting work.

A mother cleans a house, and changes the diapers and picks up and gets up in the night with a sick one.

A neighbor brings in food, the best she can make for a family that has suffered loss.

A man goes to work to provide and when he gets home there is cleaning to do, and homework to help his children with, and he feels worn out by all the giving.

Lots of folks are washing the feet of those they love, and there are no slick TV commercials glorifying it all, nor any glossy ads in the magazines that make us think this is where life will really be found. But Jesus who could have done anything in all the world, chose to give the disciples his last meal, and wash their dusty feet.

And the next morning their stomachs were empty once more, and their feet were dirty after another day's sweat. But the love in the giving is never forgotten, even to this day. When all the beaches and mountains and orchestra sounds are no more love that has been given and received will still be.

"A new commandment I give to you. Love one another just as I have loved you."

And then he gave not just his last meal, nor just a moment's washing, but his life on the cross because of his love for you.

"Love one another, just as I have loved you."