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 Date: March 20, 2008 – Maundy Thursday  
 Title: The Sign of the Cross  
 Text: John 13:1-20, 31-35  
 Theme: God is glorified and proclaimed by the humble service that His people render to one another.

#### Introduction:

In the Christian liturgical calendar, Holy Thursday or Maundy Thursday is the feast or holy day falling on the Thursday before Easter that commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus Christ with the Apostles. It is the fifth day of Holy Week and is followed by Good Friday.

On this day four events are commemorated:

- the washing of the Disciples' feet by Jesus Christ,
- the institution of the Last Supper,
- the agony of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane,
- and the betrayal of Christ by Judas Iscariot.

The word *Maundy* is derived through Middle English, and Old French *mandé*, from the Latin *mandatum*, the first word of the phrase "Mandatum novum . . ." ("A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you"), the statement by Jesus in the Gospel of John (13:34) by which Jesus explained to the Apostles the significance of his action of washing their feet.

The statements of verses 31-35 form the essence of this day. The visual or sign is noted in verses 5-11, the explanation is found in verses 12-20, and it is summarized in verses 31-35.

John 13-16 is a singular event. Our Lord has moved from a public ministry to the more intimate circle of His twelve disciples. The communication of our Lord to His disciples is called the Upper Room Discourse. There is significant drama surrounding these events.

Notice the shift from chapter 12 to that of chapter 13:

- 1) "crowd" 12:12, 29, and 34,
- 2) "Jesus went away and hid Himself" 12:36b,
- 3) the summarizing idea of 12:37-43 and finally,
- 4) "During supper" 13:2,
- 5) "to wash the disciples' feet 13:5.

#### Questions:

1. How are you serving the body of Christ? The question is not, "What are you doing?" but rather "What does this look like?"
2. Whom do you serve?

**To Know:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to know Jesus as our servant-savior.

**To Choose:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Him above all else by serving one another.

**To Feel:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of humble service by loving one another.

### **How will they best hear?**

- I. The purpose for His coming is at hand (12:27, 28; 13:1).

Twenty-two times John uses the word “hour.” Almost without exception it refers to the cross activity of Jesus Christ whereby fellowship with God is restored. I would like us to simply read the following verses in order to grasp the power of this moment (**[READ]** 12:23, 27; 13:1, 3; 16:32; 17:1).

- II. The picture of deep humility (vv. 5-20, 31-35).

The intent of this sign was for His disciples to know how they were to live in His absence.

- A. The example/illustration of Christianity (vv. 5-11)

The initial dialogue between Peter and our Lord is secondary to the actual event. In the interaction Jesus shows how salvation never needs to be repeated. Those who are saved can dirty their feet, but they are not unclean. It is only an unregenerate heart that makes one unclean.

1. The question (v. 6)
2. The answer (v. 7)
3. The response (v. 8a)
4. The rebuttal (v. 8b)
5. The request (v. 9)
6. The response (vv. 10, 11)

Our Lord’s interaction with Peter is not the immediate purpose of the example. However, our Lord is infinitely patient with Peter’s impetuous nature. Jesus then explains what the purpose of the illustration is.

- B. The explanation of Christianity (vv. 12-20)

1. The question (v. 12)
2. The explanation (vv. 13-20)

Regardless as to your position in life as equals, serve one another (vv. 14, 16). As you receive one another you are receiving me and He who sent me (vv. 17-20). There is a

wideness to the body of Christ that must be embraced and there is a separation in the body of Christ that must be healed.

C. The essence/summarization of Christianity (vv. 31-35)

God is glorified by our love for one another. Such love on our part demands that we accept people for who they are and not for what we think they can become. It is in this type of display that God is glorified and proclaimed.

We should place no confidence in our flesh to follow through with what the Lord just stated (vv. 36-38). To live and love like Jesus, demands that we rest and trust Him to do in us and through us what is required of us.

Dr. Gary Sattler of Northwestern Seminary makes the following comments concerning John 13:

“Most of us will never have to face death on a cross or physical death at all, for the sake of anyone, but we are called upon to die “little deaths” on a regular basis. We will not be called on literally to wash someone’s feet – the task of a servant and a display of hospitality in Jesus’ world – but we may experience the Holy Spirit encouraging us to apologize even though we are sure we are right; nudging us to offer someone time, money or energy when we believe they don’t really deserve it; challenging us to have those hard conversations that will restore relationships; inviting us to stand aside (and even enjoy it) when someone else gets all the attention and praise.”

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As we consider this week and the coming days, may the Holy Spirit enable us to enter into the experience and to feel the events like the early church.

APPLICATION: (What’s the NEXT STEP?)

1. Foot washing is a simple example of our Lord’s deep humiliation. He was willing to die the death of the cross in order to glorify His Father by voluntary submission to His purpose.
2. It is as you and I serve one another that God is both glorified and proclaimed. May His name be openly and unashamedly glorified and proclaimed by us and through us to those around us.