Maundy Thursday,

There is something about this evening, and the Last Supper that I love. I can just imagine the warm feeling of Jesus gathered with his closest disciples. You can almost feel the warmth of friendship that has been forged over countless miles of dirt roads. I imagine their dinner lit by the glow of oil lanterns, filled with the smells of bread and roasted lamb, as they share together glasses of wine and the closeness of well loved companions. It is a meal that feeds their body, their minds and their souls.

Then Jesus invites them to see a greater reality. This is a meal already filled with great meaning. The Passover meal after all is the Jewish meal that recounts how God had liberated the Hebrew people when they were slaves in Egypt. It is a story of Liberation and of God’s salvation. Then Jesus does the unexpected. As Corinthians recounts, Jesus takes the Massa and the cup of blessing and thanks giving; and instead of pointing back towards the historical Passover, he points towards his own body and blood given for the disciples and he invites them to continue doing this in remembrance of him.

To understand this one needs to understand the symbols used here. Blood represents not death, but life in this case the very life of God, and Body for Christ is how this life of God has been incarnated, that is how it has become flesh. Thus in these simple words, Jesus captures how the life of God has been poured out in love, as Jesus has been born, lived and in how he will soon die. All of this, broke, shed for you. And then Jesus passes around this bread and this wine and as his disciples eat and drink, this love, this divine life becomes a part of who they are.

In this meal, in these simple acts of eating and drinking, Jesus enacts, the commandment that is at the heart of Maundy Thursday. , “Just as I have loved you, you should love one another” Christ was born, lived and died so that we might be forgiven, made whole and given the life of God within us, the life of God that we eat and drink. In this meal, in this commandment Jesus directs us to see this love, and then he invites us to become a part of it, allowing our birth, or life and our death to also be an act of love that forgives, that makes whole, that recognizes the life of God in each other and seeks to nurture life. God, our life even the universe, the purpose of it all is summed up in this meal, and this commandment, to love.

Recently as a part of our clergy book group we have been reading Neil Turk’s the Universe Within. When I look at the picture of the universe that Physicists are painting I am amazed. The whole universe begins to seem to me more and more miraculous. He writes that according to the expansionist theory of the universe, the chances of having the right conditions for the universe to even begin to unfold is 1in 10 to the power of 10 to the power of 10 to the power of 120 and then for the now 13.8 billion year history of the universe to unfold to this point where you and I can exists and be invited into life and to be given the ability wonder at it all, and wonder at God, talk about extravagant love, a love that moves in all of this, though the creation of galaxies and stars, though the death and rebirth of stars and planets, creating this perfect balance, which has allowed life to bursts forth and develop. That though is a picture almost too big for us to grasp. Even this last supper is filled with a richness of imagery that seems to lie beyond what we can easily embrace.

So in the Gospel of John, John simplifies it and he describes how Jesus, took off his outer robe, tied a towel around him self, poured water in a basin and he began to wash his disciples feet. On dirty, hot roads, walked in sandles, washing a person’s feet was an act of hospitality, performed by the lowest servant. And here is Christ, their Rabbi, their teacher, the very embodiment of the one who created galaxies, and supernova, striped down to the clothing of a slave, doing this lowly task, washing away the dirt and smell of may miles, so that these guest might be welcomed, that they might be loved.

And this is awkward, this is difficult, to receive such love. Thank God for Peter, who expresses our awkwardness so well. It is so hard for us to receive such extravagant love, even when our life has always depended on it. It is so hard to have our feet washed, not only by those we know, but by God, whose humility has lifted us up as honoured guests.

Then comes the most profound grace of them all. “So if I, your Teacher and Lord, 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.” God’s love is such that God has humbled God’s self to care for life, and this love is such that we too have been invited to be co-workes, co lovers with God, by our self’s becoming humble, by becoming servants and slaves to each other, and by doing the simple tasks of nurturing life in each other.

It might not seem like much, bread and wine, smelly feet and dirty water. But it is by these thing, though God’s Word, filled with God’s love that the Word that shaped the cosmos, that the love that gave us life, and the Grace which draws us into God is both revealed and made real for you. So come, receive this water and with this water receive God’s love, and with this towel may this love become your life. Come receive this bread and wine, and with this bread and wine may God’s life and passion become your passion and the life of the world.

Amen