

Maundy Thursday—March 28, 2024
Text: Exodus 24:3-11
Theme: Maundy Thursday Windows



During Lenten midweek services, we have been looking at the Lord's Prayer Windows down the south side of the Nave. During Holy Week we will focus our attention on the front windows. Of course, it is dark and you cannot see them tonight but Shelly Bychowski has photographed them for us and they are printed on the front of your bulletin. We have two windows in front that describe Maundy Thursday. The first window shows us Jesus washing His disciples' feet, and the second window shows Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. The prayer of the day and the readings for Maundy Thursday this year all tend to push us towards the Lord's Supper but our windows seem to shout out, "wait, there is something to see before you get to the supper!"

Have you ever been to a banquet or a reception where you never really spend any quality time with the guest of honor? Think about weddings that were so crowded and loud that you never got to even wish the bride and groom well much less have a meaningful conversation with them. Think of fundraisers with a famous guest to draw the crowd but even though you paid your admission, you didn't get within 50 feet of the special guest. That is not how God does things.

Look at the Old Testament reading. Moses and the leaders of the Israelites went up on the mountain and ate and drank with God.

"Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank." But all of this happened after the covenant had been sealed. Moses told the people what God demanded and the people agreed. Moses wrote down the words of God, slaughtered the appropriate animal and threw the blood on the altar and on the people. That sealed the covenant after which God ate and drank with His people's leaders.

Now look at the windows. We have two windows that frame the meal. First Jesus washes the feet of His disciples. The washing is a sign of purification. Like Moses purified the people with blood, so Jesus purifies His disciples with foot washing. Once clean they are ready for the covenant meal. The second window shows Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and you might notice His friends sleeping in the foreground. Having just been purified and filled with the body and blood of their Lord, they cannot stay awake while He prays.

This should not surprise us. Think back to Exodus again. After the big bonding moment in Exodus 24, Exodus 32 comes along, and we read about the golden calf. The people had just seen God execute a covenant between them and a few chapters later, they are melting down their gold to make an idol to worship. That's human beings for you. We have very short memories, and we often fail to see the forest for the trees.

See, faith is not a "one and done" proposition. Faith is like a living organism that needs nourishment and exercise in order to thrive. That is why we gather here every week and sometimes, like tonight, midweek. Our faith needs nourishment so that we can stay awake and watch for Jesus. We know He is going to return and we are called to stay awake until He does. Like He washed the disciples feet, He has washed us in Baptism. Like He fed the disciples with His

body and blood, so too does He feed us with His Holy Supper. And like He asked the disciples to stay awake while He prayed, likewise He asks us to stay awake until He returns.

It is not an easy task because the Devil tries valiantly to distract us with all kinds of puny cares in this world. But that is why we come here. We cannot change the Devil's evil nature. He will do what he can do to tear us down, get in our way and sidetrack us from our mission. What we can do is build up our defenses so that he cannot reach us. Tonight, we gather again around this altar and receive the true body and blood of the one who hung from the cross and suffered Hell for our sins. It's like putting on a suit of armor. The Devil can throw all the temptation He likes at us and it will strike our suit of faith and roll off. Stay awake. Stay vigilant and watch until our Lord returns. He is coming soon.