



Sermon

Thursday, April 9, 2020

St. Michael's Anglican Church
Maundy Thursday
The Rev. Richard Grimball

In 1954, Johnny Cash and the Tennessee Two convinced record producer Sam Phillips to hear their music. There are two stories about that meeting, though my favorite is from the movie *Walk the Line*. Cash and the Two are playing traditional Gospel Tunes, and Phillips stops the group in mid-stride. He wants to hear something else, something real and from the heart. He asks Johnny Cash to sing one song, the one song he would sing if it were his last day on earth. Cash asks Phillips if he has anything against the Air Force, to which Phillips replies 'No'. Having served in the Air Force, Cash obviously had a lot to say, and begins to sing *Folsom Prison Blues*. The rest is history, as Johnny Cash was challenged to sing about his life experiences while on earth, and not from the recordings of another's heart.

Today we join Jesus in the Upper Room, a room that has been prepared for Jesus' Last Supper and the washing of the Disciples' feet. This gathering is in anticipation of tomorrow, Good Friday, and the graphic visual of handing over the reins of responsibility to the Disciples. Jesus is preparing the Disciples for walking with Him after the crucifixion, and teaching them a song and rhythm of life that doesn't just walk the line. Jesus is relying on the Disciples to embody everything they were taught and experienced the past three years. The reality of this transition--as Jesus knows, as the Disciples know, and as we know--is that responsibility and leadership create a host of emotions and experiences that don't initially follow the script...if ever.

You and I are sitting in the corner of the Upper Room, afforded the best seat in the house. The twelve gather for a meal with Jesus, and while sitting around the table a conversation begins about who is the greatest. Jesus responds to that conversation with washing the Disciple's feet, and during such an act of service Jesus also acknowledges that one of them will betray Him. Amidst the reality of what's coming tomorrow, and the reality of not just Judas the betrayer but the initial flight of all the disciples, is that Jesus focuses His attention of what is most important: Gathering in His name, serving in His name, and pointing to Him as the way, the truth, and the light. It's the kernel of truth, and the truth of practice, that will continue to define the Disciples as Christians...and that continue to define us as Christians today.

You and I have the option to remain in the corner as an observer. We also have the personal choice to join Jesus at the table. In order to be at the table, though, we will have to let folks at the table hear the song that we find ourselves singing, even on the best of days.

Verse 1: There are times when we want to be the greatest, even at the expense of others, and even in the name of Jesus.

Verse 2: No matter how many times we gather with Jesus for a meal at His table, we still follow Judas out the door of the church with a bag of silver...and betray Him.

Verse 3: When we are serving others in the name of Jesus, we are also standing on the street corner with the Pharisees.

The chorus, however, is what Jesus sings, and it is the final song of the day.

Chorus: I know that you are broken. I know that you do and say things that you know you shouldn't. I know that you walk the line, here one day, there the next. No matter what you do and say, I still love you. Every day I want to walk with you, as you recognize this about yourself and name it. Don't worry. I am the name that heals and transform hearts. When you ask in my name to heal those tendencies and hurts, I am there, your personal surgeon and trainer who is gentle and kind. This is how I want you to sit and rise as you come to my table, loving me and serving the people I place in your daily walk. I want you to walk with me, so that you can walk with them, and feel the joy and freedom of not having to walk the line.

I invite you--yes you who are watching me--to transition from a point of observation to a place of participation. Please pause this service, and go find a bowl or basin that is large enough to hold both of your feet. You will also need a large pitcher to hold water, and a towel of some sort to dry each other's feet after each washing. Once you are settled, press play and enjoy watching some short clips of St. Michael's families who are washing each other's feet. And remember: No matter how bruised or broken, Jesus wants you to walk with Him, and not just to walk the line!

Questions for discussion:

1. What song do you normally sing as you walk through each day, a song that recognizes Verses 1-3 while sitting at the Table? I sing a lot in my head, so my song today is "I Walk the Line."
2. Has your song changed, especially since the change in how we are currently experiencing life each day?