

Maundy Thursday, April 14, 2022  
First Lesson: Psalm 116: 1-4, 12-19  
Gospel Lesson: John 13: 1-17, 31b-35  
Sermon Series: Passion Effect  
Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

**We are in the thick of Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, which begins the countdown to the time of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection;**

- Our sermon series to reflect this significant time of our history is the "Passion Effect."
- And so where I would like to begin our journey this evening is by asking a few questions for us to think about and that is...why?
- **Why did Jesus go through any of this?**
- Why are you and I here, reliving his experience year after year after year?
- What are we supposed to take away from these stories of Jesus ministry and **the cost of him** living out this ministry?

- Furthermore, how are we supposed to respond to these stories...especially since this event happened over 2000 years ago?
- These are some of the questions that I am suggesting for us to unpack a little further this week;
- In fact, I encourage you all, even after this message this evening, to keep exploring these stories for yourself because in doing so, I would imagine that even more questions may surface for you.
- And you know, I suppose I just answered one of the questions raised already in this very invitation;
- For one of the reasons why you and I do visit these stories on a yearly basis is because it is inevitable, **that you and I will discover** something new each time;

- **Like a good mystery novel or movie**, there is always something new to be discovered, that we may not have noticed before in the Bible.
- This is why I personally love to study the Bible.... For it is very interesting, challenging, sometimes disturbing, inspiring and life-giving all at the same time.
- Furthermore, I will give you a hint to another answer to the question that I raised of why Jesus willingly suffered and lost his life as a result;
- For the reason is embedded in both the word Maundy Thursday and the title of this sermon series, "Passion Effect."
- Looking at the meaning of Maundy Thursday first;
- It is the Thursday before Easter, known as either Maundy Thursday, or Holy Thursday.
- The word Maundy is derived from the Latin word for "command," and refers to Jesus' commandment

to the disciples to "**Love one another as I have loved you.**"

- So one of the reasons why Jesus went through all of this in his crucifixion, death and resurrection was because **he loves us**;
- For John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him **may not perish** but may have eternal life."
- This is a familiar passage of scripture that I am certain many of us have heard over and over again.
- For some, this passage John 3:16 is a scripture of salvation.
- At least this is the way I had always learned this scripture to be applied in my own life.
- In one of our 5:30 Wednesday class; Applying the Sermon to life, we unpacked this scripture of John

3:16 and we began to envision this scripture in another way.

- For I don't know about you, but I always got hung up on the word belief in this John 3:16 text; for how does one show that they believe in Jesus?
- How does one prove that they believe in Jesus?
- Is this something that God can just sense within our hearts?
- Do we show our belief by the way we live our lives?
- Then I thought it helpful to look at this scripture from the point of view of looking at what Jesus' character has revealed to us through scripture.
- As I recall some of the parables and stories that we have reviewed in our Lenten journey together; the barren fig tree, Mary and the alabaster jar, the parable of the two sons and their father;
- Then when I bring in some of the scriptures that I have introduced throughout our sermon series this year;

- The scripture in John 10:10b, “ I have come so that they may have life and live it abundantly,”
- **Or Luke 4:18**; “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,’
- **Or the parable of the king in Matthew 25:45**, when Jesus in response to how the hungry and thirsty were to be treated said; ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me,’
- I think it is clear, the character of Jesus, both fully human and fully divine;
- For **His character** was one that said to **give the fig tree one more chance**;
- **His character** was one who loved both his betrayer and the faithful;

- **His character** was one, where he thought the inheritance should go to both the older son and younger son, no matter what.
- **Jesus character** was one where he was concerned for the marginalized;
- **He wept with** the brutalized;
- **He hungered and thirsted** with the poor;
- **He ate with the** sinners;
- **And even when** the woman was about to get stoned for adultery; **the Word tells us she was caught in the very act.** (John 8:4)
- Jesus in John 8:6 stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger instead;
- **They kept** demanding an answer, so he stood up and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”
- Then he (Jesus) stooped down again and wrote in the dust, leaving her accusers slipping away one

by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman.

- Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”
- “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “ Neither do I. Go and sin no more.” (John 8: 1-11)
- **Church, this is the character of Jesus** who is an equal part of the Triune God we honor in worship, God the Creator, Jesus the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit the Sustainer;
- **God’s character is filled with nothing** but love... agape unadulterated, uncompromising, unconditional love;
- This is a love that cannot be erased from any of us;
- This is a love that **nothing and no one** can separate us from.



- Therefore, when you and I say we believe in Jesus, we are essentially saying that we believe in everything that Jesus stands for;
- **And our faith becomes evident**, when we strive daily to live like Jesus;
- **Our belief becomes apparent**, when we strive everyday to love like Jesus;
- **For if Jesus hungers and thirsts with the poor**, then so should we;
- **If Jesus shows compassion to the blind**, then so should we;
- **If Jesus shows empathy towards the sinner**, then so should we;
- For why shouldn't we?
- For Romans 3: 23-24 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*
- Meaning, there was once a time where we too needed someone to extend the same grace, mercy, love and forgiveness towards us;

- **So we love because God loved us first** (1 John 4);
- **And this and more is how much God loves us;**
- **It is a love** that has no bounds;
- **It is a love** that cannot be adequately calculated by even the most advanced mathematician;
- **It is a love** that cannot be quantified by even the most acclaimed physicist;
- Which then becomes a fine time to bring in the significance of the sermon series the “Passion Effect.”
- For just as we learned on Sunday that the word hosanna had dual meaning scripturally, it was a word that reflected both adoration and lament;
- The word Passion also has somewhat of a dual connotation in the way I am theologically engaging with it as well.
- For the word passion in greek means (Greek *πάσχω* "to suffer, to be acted on" and even in Late

Latin *passio* was also translated to be "passion; suffering."

- The word passion in the English language however, is a feeling of intense enthusiasm towards or compelling desire for someone or something.
- **Passion as you and I typically use the term, gives you and I a reason to keep learning and to work toward mastery.**
- **Passion gives you and I** something in common with other people, and so fosters social bonds.
- So in a nutshell, **Passion gives you and I** purpose.
- Furthermore, **humanity is God's ultimate purpose.**
- I'm talking about our welfare, our well being, our whereabouts, our soul condition, our outcomes, our feelings...all of this and more is a concern for God.
- **You and I are God's main priority.**

- **We are God's passion;**
- Furthermore, just like a momma bear ferociously protects her cubs,
- **Jesus came to Earth** to protect those who have been removed from the story;
- **Jesus came to Earth**, because God's children were perishing.
- **God's children were suffering**— both the oppressor and the oppressed; both were suffering...whether they realized it or not; whether we realize it or not;
- You see Church, the mothering trait in me intuitively knows that the loving God that we serve, could no longer witness the world without stepping in;
- **For how long** can a loving parent watch her children self-destruct?
- **How long** can a loving creator, watch his children continue to treat one another in such a way?

- **Free will or not**, I believe that God felt the need to come to Earth in human form, to plant a seed that might promote another way;
- **Jesus both fully human and fully divine** came to Earth to show us all a better way.
- As I jump fully into our gospel this evening, this is the passion that I submit you and I are witnessing this evening....in both forms.
- For it was this driving force of passion that allowed Jesus to enter into his passion....
- For **the suffering was worth it**, if it could help humanity gain even just a glimpse of the love that God truly has for all of us;
- **The suffering was worth it**, if it could help humanity embrace and duplicate this love towards one another;
- This last supper Church as I put it into my own words, was Jesus final chance, to set the record straight for humanity while he was still in his flesh;

to allow humanity to witness a love like never before— **with the hope** that this type of love would catch hold of us like a wildfire; **with the hope** that it would catch hold like a burning fire that could never be extinguished out.

- **For 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.
- **For he loved Judas**, who was about to betray him.
- **He loved Peter** who was going to deny him.
- **Jesus loved all of them....Jesus loves all of us.**
- For Jesus had just come through the traumatic experience of being rejected by the Jewish authorities and by most of His friends and followers but nevertheless... **love was still on his mind.**
- A price was on His head; He had been condemned to die, untried and unconvicted, by the

Sanhedrin....but still Church... **love was on his mind!**

- Jesus was experiencing the full consciousness of impending death, at the same time keenly aware of His incarnate state....but you guessed it by now where I am going.... **love was still on Jesus mind.**
- Being man, although also God, Jesus could not escape death. He faced its inevitable approach with great concern, not for Himself but for His disciples....**to make sure that love** remained on their mind and within their hearts.
- Leaving the next part of this story something that the world would hopefully never forget...for the disciples and all of us were about to experience and witness **love in action**...like never before.
- For Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.

- And I would imagine at this, Judas stiffened up immediately, because from where I come from... when a person gets up and starts taking off things like Jesus did, garments, in my mind...earrings... that means **it's about to go down!**
- But this was not the case for Jesus...instead after he poured water into a basin...**Jesus stooped down** and began to wash the disciples feet and then wiped them with the towel that was tied around him;
- This work of a slave washing the feet of the disciples was so much to take in...it was too much to take in to watch the Son of God doing such an act.
- For there was a time before, Mary with the alabaster jar **essentially did the same thing,**
- But even in that, one by now could possibly explain why she would do such a thing;



- For she was a sinner who recognized that she was saved by God's grace, at least this is how I always walked away from the story thinking;
- However now, I am seeing something even more... for perhaps it was in Mary's actions that demonstrates how a human could express true love for God;
- **For it was in that instance** that something overcame her, it was something that consumed her, it was something that took over her, so much so that **she didn't care** who was looking at her;
- **She didn't care** who was criticizing her;
- **She didn't care** who was judging her;
- For Mary... it was just her and Jesus...
- Making it evident what you and I and the disciples and the others were witnessing even more, **was a woman experiencing a love like never before.**
- When Mary went out and got the most expensive perfume to anoint Jesus with...**that was love!**

- When Mary began to cry uncontrollably and inconsolably and washed Jesus feet and wiped his feet with her hair...**that was love!**
- You see the more and more I think about her actions...the more and more I am certain that it wasn't planned in that way...love just took hold of her;
- At the thought of what was about to happen to him, suddenly, there was a level of empathy and concern that enveloped her.
- Where suddenly she and Jesus was like one, allowing her to experience Jesus like never before.
- And this is what happens Church I imagine when **someone experiences true love**, a driving passion that becomes like a light switch that gets turned on in our heads and hearts;
- **Where suddenly** we are able to see like Jesus sees,
- **Where suddenly** we begin to feel as Jesus feels,

- **Where suddenly** Galatians 3:28 takes hold over us where "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, because we recognize that we are all one in Christ Jesus."
- **Where suddenly** our differences don't distract us,
- **Our backgrounds** don't separate us,
- **Our differences** don't divide us,
- And our connections begin to solidify us,
- Where when one of us hurts, we all hurt,
- When one of us experiences joy, we all experience joy....
- Because now we can see just how beautiful the Imago Dei really is;
- The God within you, and the God within me is fully recognized and the potential of it all, **sometimes just brings you to your knees** because suddenly it all just makes sense....you and me and me and you... all of it...it just makes sense!

- **And so it happened** first with Mary that allowed you and I to gain a glimpse of true love at its finest, and now Jesus was affirming her very actions by essentially doing the same thing;
- Jesus who pointedly contrasts Simon's neglect of even giving Him water for His feet...which was a decent thing to do...**it still wasn't the most loving thing to do.**
- Jesus instead began to adopt Mary's washing His feet with tears and wiping them with her hair, in similar fashion, as he washed the disciples feet, thereby putting the exclamation point for anyone who might have misunderstood what it means to love before.
- For in Jesus taking the time to wash all of the disciples feet, both the traitor and the faithful;
- Jesus was demonstrating how we are to love.
- **We are to take the time** to truly invest in one another,

- **We are to take the time** to truly pour into one another,
- **We are to take the time** to truly listen to one another,
- **We are to take the time** to truly connect with one another,
- Through small groups, worship, fellowship and more; in our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness...this is how we begin to make space in our hearts to really begin to love one another as God loves us.
- For in a raging pandemic where the threat of isolation has proven to become even too much for the professed introvert, hopefully this time around there will be a new passion ignited within all of us like never before;
- To live out the new commandment to love one another just as Christ loves us.
- For it is this type of love that sets us all free!

- Aleluia, Aleluia, Amen!