

Maundy Thursday 2015  
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
The Rev. Shari Young, Preacher

These words came to mind as I thought about Jesus and his disciples at the Last Supper  
From the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
I will fear no evil  
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies  
Thou anointest my head with oil  
My cup runneth over*

Not only were his enemies there in Jerusalem, not far from the Upper Room, plotting at that very moment how to intercept him and destroy him, but even there at table sat Judas, one of his own followers, waiting in the darkness of his mind for his moment of betrayal. Spiritual maturity is the ability to rest in God; to trust in God; even as the wolf howls outside the door.

The scripture tells us that Jesus and his disciples were celebrating Passover. Even today this is the central ceremony of Judaism. Lighting candles at sundown, and beginning the ancient ceremonial telling of their liberation from slavery from Egypt using the elements of a symbolic meal.

Jesus gives new meaning to this Passover meal because he is about to become the lamb who is sacrificed, whose blood is salvific, just as the blood of the Passover lamb saved the Israelites from the Angel of death.

At our weekly Eucharist we enact the Last Supper through a symbolic meal. We light the candles and tell of the story of Jesus and his Last Supper and the bread and wine take on new meaning through his death and resurrection as a source of spiritual life and renewal.

Our weekly Eucharist has very deep roots, thousands of years old, which echo back to the ancient tradition of Judaism, our Mother religion.

We have also inherited a tradition of hospitality.  
I used to think that hospitality should be included as one of the minor sacraments. Judaism is a very earthy religion, thoroughly embracing every part of being human as good and right and holy.

Savoring a delicious meal is embraced and the Eucharist has this same spirit of hospitality: Taste and see the Lord is good.

During the Last Supper meal Jesus got up, and took off his robe, tied a towel around himself, and began to wash the feet of his disciples. In the Last Supper, Jesus is taking this very common act, generally done by a servant, and using it as a demonstration of a profound teaching.

In its usual place in the order of a meal, this came as the guests entered the house from the dusty road.....it was an act of welcome and hospitality.

As much as a generous hospitality is Christian, so too is humility. Hospitality is easy, but true humility is hard. It is to be without artifice, to be genuine, to be real, to receive others with equanimity. To wash the feet of others is to be a willing servant; not a slave acting out of duty, but a servant honoring everyone equally acknowledging the presence of God in all of us.

Jesus sums this up in his new commandment,

*“that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

This love is not something we conjure up, proceeding from our will and intention; it is the Holy Spirit flowing through us. To love one another, is to acknowledge the presence of God in all people.....to receive them with hospitality and humility and grace.