

Maundy Thursday 2017
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 St. Paul's, Wallingford CT



An invitation.
 To more than supper.
 An invitation to enter the upper room
 knowing only that it will change your life in ways you can't fully fathom.

Imagine, if you will, what it must've been like
 to be there that night in Jerusalem.
 Already it had been a heady week,
 beginning with that raucous entrance into Jerusalem
 on the day we call Palm Sunday.
 Some of our Bibles have subtitles
 (not in the original manuscripts, mind you)
 that label it "The Trimphal Entry" – but was it?

Even as those "Hosannas" rang through the air
 and people jockeyed to get a glimpse of Jesus,
 there were those already plotting to kill him.
 And don't think they were necessarily different from one another.
 It's entirely possible to be both intrigued by someone, even excited,
 and at that same time feel threatened, scared.

In fact, if we're honest we might admit that
 we feel this way sometimes even now.

We can tell our church friends how much we love Jesus –
 oh wait, we're Episcopalians – do we even tell our church friends
 we love Jesus?
 Dare we mention to other friends and co-workers
 that having a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus Christ
 is the most important thing in our lives?
 Because that's what it is to be a Christian, you know.
 That's why Jesus came in the first place.

And that's what tonight's invitation is about.
It's about entering into more than an upper room;
it's entering into a deeper, abiding relationship with Jesus.

Each of those steps leads us to a place of being more like Jesus.
Each step prepares us to *be* Jesus in this world God so loves.
To take the side of
the vulnerable, the poor, the unpopular, the outcast.
Not only in word, but deed,
in love and service, sacrificing our time and money.

It means letting ourselves be vulnerable
just as Jesus the Christ was so vulnerable as to become one of us.
In that upper room,
as he washes those feet pulled out of sandals
after a lifetime of walking dusty roads.
In that upper room,
as he gives his very self, his body and blood,
to sustain us, to live in us.
In that upper room, as he turns the ways of this world upside down,
revealing that life isn't about winning or accumulating or status,
but . . . *love*.
That's the new law of the land: love. As Jesus loves.

That love not only brought Jesus up to the upper room
but back down those stairs into the night.
What a temptation it would be to stay up there:
bar the door, blow out the candles, wait it out.

But, no, Jesus leads the way down those stairs
to the terrible drama that awaits.
He had done everything he could to prepare them,
but it was still such a shock.
Even with the hindsight of two thousand years,
even with the story written out for our benefit,
we still don't know exactly what it means for us to follow him.

Except, that it will lead us to people, places and things
we might never choose for ourselves.
It will open our eyes to see God in Christ at work in the world
where we least expect.
It will require dying to our old selves, our old fears and assumptions,
so we can rise with him to new life, new priorities and joys.
Most of all, it demands love –

not sentimental, but sacrificial, and active, without limit.

Honestly, it would be easier not to enter that room.

Not to give our lives fully to Jesus.

It is, after all, an invitation –

not coercion.

Do you have the guts to accept Jesus' invitation?

To follow no matter where he leads you,

to be more like him,

to be his hands and heart and feet in this world God so loves?

An invitation.

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