

After the Parade Passes

We have been able to witness all types of parades in New England, especially in the last twenty years as our sports teams have all won “World Championships.” These parades have included ticker tape, confetti, pompoms, balloons, noise makers, floats, tossed candy, and other things. Have you ever seen what was left on the ground after the parade was finished? It is usually a mess. The parade watchers, those in the parade, and even those who have organized the parade simply go home and go about their business. However, Palm Sunday was no ordinary parade.

We’ve heard the reading as well as remember the account of the entry into Jerusalem. While the event is of great importance, we need to move on from there. Let’s recall what happens afterward. This does depend on which account of the Gospel we read. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all have him going to the temple and overturning tables. Remember, people were coming into the temple as it was Passover. We then find some parables that Jesus told to predict what was coming. The same type of predictions happen in John’s Gospel but they dispense with the parables. Chapter 12 just ends and they right in to Chapter 13 and the washing of the feet at the Passover meal.

The Passover meal in itself a marvelous event. It is from this that we receive one the two sacraments that we celebrate in the UCC/NACCC in Communion. We recognize the significance of this act whenever we have communion. We take seriously the community part as we know that it is still the table of Christ from which we distribute the bread and the cup to all who seek to partake of it. We are exhorted “Whenever you do this, do it in memory of me.” This will be celebrated again at our joint Maundy Thursday service at First Congregational

Church at 7:30. We also cannot forget the mandatum or mandate that we are to offer service to others. Jesus modeled this for us as he washed the disciples' feet.

The act of washing others' feet was not unusual back then as it was for us. It was customary for the host offer foot washing to any travelers who entered their home. Feet were only encased in sandals and were exposed to all kinds of elements. Therefore, everyone did so before they entered a home. If you were wealthy, you could have your servants perform this task. However, many times, it was the home-owner who did this as a gesture of hospitality. Therefore, the symbolism of the Master washing the feet of those who learned from him could be uncomfortable for the disciples.

This is not different for us today. Unless you are employed as a manicurist/pedicurist or in a podiatrist's office, we are not accustomed to touching the feet of others. Some people are very sensitive about this. If either of our churches wanted to include a foot-washing ritual as part of Maundy Thursday, I would bet that we'd have to press folks into service. It is as humbling to wash feet as it is to have your feet washed. It is not so much the act of washing feet but of being in service to others in the name of Jesus that is important here. We are called to serve!

Little did the disciples and those gathered realize that the mandatum and communion would be the earthly parting gifts that they would receive from Jesus. These gifts remain for us today as we commemorate the death of Jesus and bring life to his final earthly presents. I hope that you will be able to join us on Thursday evening as we commemorate these as well as the Passion Narrative found in all four Gospels. If you cannot join us or if you are in search of a way to commemorate this time on your own, I invite you to spend some quiet time to reflect on Mark Chapters 14-15, Matthew Chapters 26-27, Luke Chapters 22, 23, and 24, and John Chapters 18-19.

While you read, pray, and reflect on these readings, it is almost impossible to not be sad. However, I want you to reflect on our Season of Lent/Season of Love and feel the ultimate act of love that Jesus gives to us. Please pay attention to the magnitude of what Jesus endured for us and for our salvation. Jesus demonstrates the unconditional love for his disciples as well as us. This is how God truly manifests this deep love for us.

Please don't miss out on this opportunity this week. Take some time with the Gospel(s) of your choosing. Let's read. Let's pray. Let's reflect. Let's be there AFTER the parade. Amen.