



Council of Bishops

The United Methodist Church



“Doing the Best of Things At The Worst of Times”

Dismantling Racism: Council of Bishops Lenten Devotional Series

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, New York Episcopal Area

Maundy Thursday, April 1, 2021

Scripture: John 13:1-5, 33-35

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Key points:

- The challenge that Jesus presents to anyone wanting to be a disciple is to do the best of things at the worst of times.
- The challenges of the present day (coronavirus and racially motivated killings) can feel like the worst of times, causing fatigue and mental anguish as we deal with the ongoing presence and effects of disease, racism, tribalism and colonialism.
- Followers of Jesus throughout history have experienced the worst of times. They endured suffering and kept their faith alive despite the myriad of injustices they faced. Now it is our turn.
- We are the generation being called to keep the faith alive and to demonstrate to a broken world that we will speak out about racism and violence, we will not be complicit in perpetuating systemic racism and white privilege, and that we will not use COVID 19 as an excuse to turn a blind eye to gun violence, sexism, racism, homophobia and all forms of oppression.
- How do we rise up in the midst of fatigue and frustration to do the best of things in the worst of times?
 - Confess our sin and reacquaint ourselves with what it means to be obedient to God.
 - Become a channel for Jesus' love.

