

**HOLY (MAUNDY) THURSDAY**  
**“THE HAND OF THE LORD**  
**WHO SERVES AND FEEDS US”**  
**Text: John 13:1–17, 31b–35**  
**and 1 Corinthians 11:23–32**

Everything – the vast universe, the smallest sparrow, and yes, even our very lives – rests in the hands of Jesus.

Tonight, we stand at a pivotal moment, an hour that John the apostle marks with solemn significance: ***“Now the hour had come.”*** John continues, painting a picture of Jesus’ all-pervading awareness: ***“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God.”***

Let’s stop and consider what Jesus knew in that moment. He understood **the immense authority and power entrusted to Him by the Father**. He knew **His unique identity as the beloved Son**, fully God and fully human, God in the flesh walking among us. He knew **His earthly journey was drawing to a close**, that He would return to the glory from which He came. And with a heavy heart, He knew **the betrayal that loomed**, when He would be handed over to those who plotted His death.

So, with all this knowledge, and power at His disposal, **what did Jesus do with His hands?** Did He raise them in defiance, commanding the events to cease? Did He clench His fists in a surge of self-preservation? No. Instead, John tells us: ***“He rose from supper. He laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around His waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.”***

Think about the **hands** of Jesus. These were the **hands** that stilled storms, healed the sick, and even raised the dead. These were the divine and holy **hands** of God made flesh. And what did He choose to do with them in this critical hour? He humbled Himself, taking on the role of the lowest servant. He knelt before His followers and began to wash their travel-worn, dusty, and likely smelly feet.

In that culture, foot washing was a task reserved for slaves, something no one of higher status would even consider. Yet, our Lord, the King of kings, willingly embraced this humble service. He lowered Himself, (quite literally), to the ground. He cradled those tired and dirty feet in His own **hands**. The very **hands** that held all creation now gently cleansed the feet of His disciples.

Jesus then speaks words that resonate with great meaning: ***“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”*** He was setting a pattern for how His followers are to live. He was showing us the very heart of true love and service.

Now, we might not walk on dusty roads in sandals every day. The literal act of foot washing might not carry the same immediate cultural weight for us today. But, the spirit of His action speaks volumes about His love and His desire for us to serve one another.

Think about the gifts God has given each of you – your talents, your time, your resources. Why has He entrusted these things to you? It's so that you might use them to bless and serve those around you. This isn't about earning God's favor or proving your worth. Our standing before God is secure in Christ alone. It's not about our titles, our bank accounts, our social standing, or our level of education. We shouldn't think, "That kind of service is beneath me. I'll only help in ways that I choose." No, the very essence of following Jesus is loving and serving one another in tangible ways.

If anyone on this earth deserved to be served, it was Jesus! He's, **"God from God, Light from Light, very God from very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father; through whom all things were made."** Yet, He did what only He could do. He's not just our example; He is first and foremost our Savior!

And what did our Savior do? He went all the way to the cross! He willingly laid down His perfect life for you! He endured inconceivable suffering. He shed His precious blood. He died on that cruel tree. All to forgive your sins. All to carry the heavy burden of our selfishness, our greed, our pride – the very sins that deserve eternal separation from God – to the cross, where He defeated them once and for all! By His death, He conquered death itself. Jesus Himself declared, **"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."** He did it all for you, out of an immeasurable love for you.

As the Apostle Paul reminds the Corinthians, a church struggling with division and self-importance, our Lord served His disciples in yet another profound way on that Holy Thursday. Paul points them, and us, back to the selfless service of Jesus. It is this service that sustains us even today.

Jesus ***"took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'"*** These are the powerful words of Jesus' last will and testament before His sacrifice. These words hold true for us now, just as they did for His disciples then. He served them in that upper room, and He continues to serve His disciples, us, today.

This, dear friends, is the Sacrament, the Holy Communion. Instituted by Jesus Himself, it miraculously unites His own words with the simple elements of bread and wine, delivering the very forgiveness of sins He won for us on the cross. This isn't just a symbolic gesture; it is a real and tangible gift of the Lord's ongoing service to us. Tonight, and whenever we gather at this altar, Jesus feeds us with His very body and blood, ***"given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins."***

We simply take Jesus at His word. When He says, ***"This is My body,"*** we believe that it truly is His body. When He says, ***"This cup is the new covenant in My blood,"*** we trust that it truly is His blood. This sacred meal is not about what we do or how worthy we feel. It is entirely about what He has done and continues to do for us! His body and His blood, given into our hands and mouths, are the ultimate expression of His service and His boundless love for us.

And this love, this incredible gift we receive at this table, doesn't end here. It drives us outward to live according to Jesus' new commandment: ***"that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."*** Having been filled with the very presence of

Jesus through this meal, you're now equipped and empowered to go out from this place and love your neighbors – especially those who share in this same faith.

Use your **hands**, the same **hands** that receive the precious gifts of Christ's body and blood, to serve them, to care for them, to show them the love of Jesus in tangible ways. They too need to hear the good news that you know today – that Jesus loves them deeply and unconditionally. As the Apostle John reminds us, ***“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”***

Never forget this crucial truth: **your love for others is not about your own merit or effort.** Having all things in His hands, Jesus first served and loved you. He continues to serve and love you with a love that knows no end. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Hand of the Lord Who Serves and Feeds Us