

*Known*

Exodus 12:12-14 | John 13:1-17, 34-35

Rev. Mary Elizabeth Hanchey

April 1, 2021

Are there things that you wear to let people know who you are?

Flags that you fly?

Bumper stickers you display?

Have you ever worn the wrong color blue on a local campus?

Just this week several of your pastors reflected on what clergy wear and why. Did you know that there are glow in the dark stoles being made now for clergy to wear at night-time vigils? I think that's pretty cool. We talked about the trend for young clergy and women, in particular, to wear the clerical collar - and we reflected on the idea that doing so may help us maneuver in spaces where people still assume that clergy are old men. But then, I don't ever wear a collar. Wearing a stole is a part of my free-church tradition.

Many of us mark ourselves by things that we display, or things that we wear.

The Exodus passage today reminds us that the Passover story is about God's instructions to the people of Israel about marking their homes to show that they belonged to God - about making their identity known.

And so then we have this passage from John that opens with preparations for the festival of the Passover. They have gathered to remember this story of making their identity known, and Jesus does this beautiful and surprising thing with washing his disciples feet. And Peter's response is tied up in identity: you can't wash MY feet - I mean - you are the Teacher! And Jesus latches on to that and says:

*So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.*

And so, year after year, as we make our own preparations to observe the Last Supper, we are reminded with startling clarity that following Jesus requires putting our bodies and spirits in humble postures - and cleaning up dirt.

But there is more - Jesus doesn't just leave it at this symbolic gesture. Jesus makes it plain:

*"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

**By THIS everyone will know that you are my disciples.**

At the Passover meal, which remembers God's instructions to the people Israel about making their identity known, Jesus says something new. You show people that you are MY disciples. Mark your identity in this way: love one another in the same way that I have loved you. Everyone will know.

Perhaps we spend quite a bit of time and energy considering how to best show who we are as followers of Jesus. Who we are as United Church. But listen to this modest proposal, to this sacred commandment - if we love from a posture of humility - without championing ourselves or our talents or making ourselves appear to be important, if we love graciously - without being easily offended, if we love fiercely so that our love is more powerful than hate, then everyone will know. Then everyone will know.

This story of the Jesus' washing his disciples feet is found in John - and only in John!

But as we make the turn toward Jesus' betrayal by Judas and his death on a cross, we remember that our observance of the Lord's Supper, our sharing of the bread and the cup together as a community, is based on the telling of the Last Supper found in the other gospels.

Hear now that story as it is told in the Gospel of Luke:

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 So Jesus[a] sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it." 9 They asked him, "Where do you want us to make preparations for it?" 10 "Listen," he said to them, "when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters 11 and say to the owner of the house, "The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" 12 He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there." 13 So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

14 When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him.

19 Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 20 And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

(Reads from the traditional communion liturgy)

Family of God, in remembrance of Jesus, we share this meal.

This is the bread of life. It is for you.

This is the cup of grace. It is for you.