

Homily

MBI: Because Christ has total claim over our lives, we must render submissive obedience to him.

FCF: Each one of us has a daily battle whether we will give Christ our submissive obedience or not.

Introduction

The bowl and the towel, the bread and the wine, the table set with Jesus at the head — each of these things was intentionally prepared by our Lord for us. Each of these things is a gift pointing to the one reality that Maundee Thursday is about: Christ is the mandating King.

"Maundy" means "mandate" or "command." As King, Jesus has the authority of command of us, his subjects, to command what he wills. He gave us his mandate on this very night.

Body

The gospel of John leaves Jesus' command, his mandate, for us in simple terms. Listen to John 13:34-35

³⁴ I now give to you all a new commandment: Love one another just as I have loved you all. I give this commandment so that you all love one another.

³⁵ Having this sort of love for one another is how everyone will know that you all are my disciples.

As I look at these words in a fresh way, God brings three thoughts to mind...

First, we see his example.

Jesus short ministry with his disciples was marked by self-sacrifice and humility. Whether Jesus was going

toe-to-toe with the Jewish intellectual elite, stooping low to heal a sick person and bring them back into community, holding and praying for children, or teaching the masses of everyday folk, Jesus' *ethos*, his way of being, was self-sacrificial love and humility.

Mark 10:45 reminds us, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus had every right to demand he be served; yet, he actually becomes the greatest servant of all.

It is to this that he calls us as his followers.

Second, we see his purpose.

It's common for all of us to want to know *why* we are being asked to do something. "I don't mind doing it, just tell me why I'm doing it first." Here, Jesus gives us that grace.

We are told he is giving us this command so that we'll do it. He wants us to love one another.

This need to be commanded is wonderfully rooted in what it means to be human. We are creatures *made* to do the will of our master. Paul says as much in Romans 6 when he says,

"Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey?" (Rm 6:16a NLT)

He then shows our choices. And these are the choices we've seen play out down through the drama of the Bible.

Paul says, "You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living." (6:16b NLT)

Christ knows how we're made because he made us: We're creatures made to serve.

Yet, he also knows our frailty and sad condition: Without God's gracious rescue, we're stuck in slavery to sin.

Hear the Psalmist sing in Psalm 103:13-14 (ESV)

"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust."

And listen to Christ's firsthand experience in our world from Hebrews 4:15

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

This resonates with me. Though I know Christ's command to love sacrificially and live humbly, I am constantly butting up against my inability to do so consistently. I, like you no doubt, fall back into living like I still serve my old master, sin.

Years ago I visited what used to be East Berlin, and though the Wall had been down for 30 years, people could still remember what it was like to live under the constant eye of the government with its vast network of informants. Though they were free in a unified

democratic Germany, the air of suspicion of one's neighbor lingered for many years.

The Kingdom of God is like that. Paul reminds us in Romans 6:18 that, "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness." (NIV)

Our citizenship has changed. We're no longer slaves in a repressive spiritual regime. We belong to God's kingdom where we live by his laws and enjoy his blessings. Yet, throughout this life we will continually be unlearning the old ways of being enslaved to sin as we experience our new life in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus gives us this command to love sacrificially and he reminds us of it so that we'll do it.

We've seen his example and his purpose, lastly, we see the result.

What will be *the* identifying marker for those who enter by faith into the Kingdom of God? Everyone can see how they are marked by this Jesus-like sacrificial love.

One of my grandfathers was a businessman and the other was a farmer. Even as a child I could tell the difference by the touch of their hands. When I took a hand to help, I would know by that hand which grandfather I was helping. My farming grandfather had rough, knobby hands. My businessman grandfather did not. His were shaped by long hours with customers in his retail store and using a pen.

In a similar way, the world will know whose we are, and I use that language intentionally, by our love. When we reach out, they will know if our hands feel like the hands of a loving God.

Conclusion

He left us his own life as an example.
His purpose is that we will obey.
And the result is that the world knows we are his.

Hear afresh the command given by the King who came to rule us:

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³⁵ Having this sort of love for one another is how everyone will know that you all are my disciples.

Transition to Communion

One of the key elements in celebrating Maundy or Mandate or Command Thursday is to take the Lord's Supper together.

Each one of us comes to the Lord's Supper as humble recipients of God's grace. We know we cannot fulfill his command to love sacrificially without his help. The Lord's Supper is one way we receive his help.

Just like bread and wine nourishes the body so it can live, so Christ nourishes us so we may live new life under his Kingship.

Join in preparing your hearts with me. [Rob takes over.]