

April 13 When “What Everybody Knows” Is Wrong John 13:1-17

V different tone to our gathering tonight: a non-English speaker cd
tell: subdued, reverent, hushed

Explainable due to historical event, cause of our gathering:

“Maundy Thursday” (from “mandatus novum”—
commandment, mandate—“A new commandment I
give you: that you, My followers, My church, all love
one another.”)

Several factors contribute to the importance, emphasis of our
remembrance of Jesus’ instruction this night:

--part of rhythm of JX’s teaching, 4th Gospel: public ministry,
teaching, signs, for the multitudes, then explaining, intimate
teaching, reflecting times w followers; now the hectic hustle
& bustle past; indoors, quiet of the Upper Room (though not
Seder dinner in John)—you and I are invited into this Room,
this final teaching, this calm before the storm

--gravity of JX’s last words; last will & testament: even
today; if yr grandmother were dying, asked you to huddle
near to her deathbed, she has something to tell you...of
course you would behave with utmost attention, focus, heavy
heart

--“The storm” =spectre of death looming like the ominous
lengthening shadows as the sun dips low over the rim of the
world—the 12 knew something was amiss; great anxiety
about the future, their Friend, JX (They were right; next
day=Good Friday (7:30))

For all these reasons we’re paying full attentn to His teaching, His
words, what He’s trying to help us to understand

But before we can understand what He’s saying, helpful to
hold aside [bracket] what we thought we already knew—
“what everybody knows”—or we’ll hear the words, picture
the event described—and miss the point JX is making

“[It’s not what you don’t know that’s the problem; it’s what you think you know that’s wrong...]”

First thing we heard: this all happens just before the Passover.

--*Everybody knows* the Passover has to do with Jewish liberation, national pride, escape from servitude and oppression in Egypt. Perhaps JX, the hope of Israel, the long-awaited Messiah, will reveal His plan for freedom from Roman occupation, power (JX can do anything)

--*Everybody knows* this is the time for His dramatic action to be explained and set in motion (and John sets the stage: “And JX, knowing that the F had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from G and was going back to G, got up from the table...”) Now’s the time for the Grand Finale to JX’s life and ministry; the Grand Unveiling of the plan for deliverance; the time has come—it has to be tonight!

And JX does the most unexpected thing:

(Lk tells us at this same Last Supper “a dispute arose as to which would be the greatest” after JX was gone. There are those very human followers arguing over who would have the corner office, jockeying over who gets the promotion, who’ll have the highest rank in the New Administratn)

So JX has a lesson to teach them; a commandment to leave w them:

“He got up, laid down his outer tunic (as a Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep,) stripped down to the clothing of a slave, and began to wash the feet of His followers.” (v 4)

This is mind-boggling, beyond comprehension

Everybody knows Lords/Kings do not perform demeaning tasks reserved only for household slaves like washing other people’s feet—it is right, proper for slaves to do such things

True to form, Peter speaks up first: “You will never wash my feet.” [“God forbid it, Lord, that You should suffer and go to the cross;” C Philippi, Mt 16:22]

Peter speaks for all of us, for common sense: if the Lord becomes the slave, then what can you count on? What holds anything together?

Shall the gardener become the CEO of the corporatn?

Shall the freshman run the University?

Shall the 5-star General waste his talent as a stenographer somewhere no one ever heard of?

This is too much, JX!

--*Everybody knows* the whole social order, the economy, wd crash in a day. Total anarchy!

Are You crazy?

--I love you too much to allow it;

--I do not understand what You are doing!

JX reassures P, all of us: “Later you will understand”

--It’s not just that Peter is dense;

--It’s that what P knew at that time—before the “Later” of the cross, Good Friday, Easter Sunday—

--It’s that P knew *what everybody knows*, and human nature could not comprehend what JX was doing.

This footwashing is > an object lesson in humility, mutual service: P cd have “gotten” that

Human nature—to create our own gods;

to project human our human nature, way of organizing things large up onto the screen of the heavens;

to see G at the Top of the Heirarchy, ruling, issuing orders, being obeyed, being served

(Remember after JX had fed the multitudes the loaves and fishes [John 6] they wanted to make Him King. He is King, of course; the True and Rightful King—but they wanted to appoint Him King on their terms, because He’d fed their bellies, to be the kind of king they expected—so of course JX had to refuse, get out of town. Had He agreed to their terms, as you know, then they wd have been sovereign, in control; JX wd have just one more puppet king, a rubber stamp to their same old same old human political

project. He came to redefine “King”, Sovereign, politics, how to get along w our friends and neighbors and strangers—everything—*what everybody knows*.

How cd P recognize a God who chooses to serve as a slave? (Apt from HS, how cd any of us? How cd any of us recognize the G of heaven in the posture of a slave?)

Before JX went to the cross and died to defeat death, and suffered humiliation to defeat the authority of the enemy, How cd Peter understand?

Human nature cannot understd what happened at the cross: “to the Jew a stumbling block; to the Gk foolishness”

JX was about to rearrange “what everybody knows”—but except by the HS, until we offer our life to JX, strive to live in His way, “commit to do the will of the Father” [John 7:19] we will not be able to comprehend what JX knew, rearranged...

So JX simply asks P to trust His word, and obey, and wash the feet of the others, even before P understands what it’s about.

This is what it means to obey, isn’t it?

Everybody knows it makes sense to wait until

--we understand the logic behind G’s call upon our lives,

--until we agree with what G is asking of us,

--G has our permission to move us on to the next phase

--we see the entire map of the future rather than this one next step along the Way, this one fork in the Path

JX, knowing He had come from G and was going to G, simply obeyed the Father, moment to moment.

(G did not crucify Jesus—human beings did—but neither did G instruct JX to “bail out” or take a shortcut away from danger: JX obeyed G the Father to the very End, and we know G redeemed the obedience of the Son.)

JX promises P “later you will understand”—in the meantime, do as I am telling you to do. (If you do not understand what the H Spirit of J is telling you to do, do you keep remembering He has promised that in time, “you will understand?” G will reveal what you need to know, in time: for now, in the meantime, we move ahead as faithfully as we know—exactly as JX did.

[Add p 169? P’s overreactn? Adding to the love of X for us, to be converted is all there is; no adding to what X has done]

Next, after JX had carried thru, washed their feet, He puts the robe back on: the Lord is going from slave back to Lord again.

Who can understand? If the Master is the servant and the servant the Master, we need to understand God in a new way. (JX has re-defined the concept “God” for any w ears to hear)

Here comes a twist:

We wd expect, if anything, that JX wd command them, “I, yr Lord and Teacher, have washed yr feet; now, your turn: I command you to wash My feet” (Reciprocation, mutual service.)

But what wd probably happen?

Wdn’t we simply keep our same pecking order, our same old human way of reckoning who’s better than whom, who outranks whom—only now we’d just reverse the old order and call it “service” or “ministry”

The CEO and the bishop wd now be first in line w the basin and the towel; the people wd be jockeying and struggling as to who cd be pre-eminent in washing the feet of JX—

we’d turn it upside down, give it a different name, and our human nature, human response wd remain exactly the same—which is the whole problem which JX came to address, to rearrange—to save.

So instead He commands, “You are now to wash the feet of one another.” Who gets to go first? Last? Who’s superior to whom?...this changes things.

The vertical dimension of the love of G come down in X is to be played out in the horizontal dimension of our lives together:

We show our gratitude to JX who has extended us such royal service by how we serve those non-royal sisters and brothers around us

(Elsewhere, JX is clear our neighbors are the Samaritans, those *least* like us those we naturally look down upon; here, JX is speaking to His Church, His followers, to you and me: we are commanded to love one another and serve one another as He has loved and served us.)

(We are so fortunate in this Church with so many examples of service to our church family we forget how radical was this command:

--you pour your time, energy into our children and toddlers most every Sunday a.m.;

--you invest on Wednesday afternoons several hours most every week to provide creative activities, full dinner, for our children and teens

--you offer many lay-led, unpaid Bible studies, discussion groups, 12-step program

--many, many of you offer untold time and energy serving on Bds and committees to keep the church machinery together so that the real church can keep functioning

—see how you serve one another;

see how it’s working...

Doesn’t everybody know that all people are created equal and that the rights of all are to be respected (actually, it seems more and more around us are forgetting the fact that “human rights” derive from our status as creatures of the sovereign Creator—we are finding, as a society, that our “rights” severed from our status as

children of God are a very precarious concept; that “rights” severed from “responsibilities” lead down an ominous road...)

The kind of egalitarian “rights of persons” dominating our political landscape and our headlines is something very different from the way we Jesus people are to serve one another

To posit that all humans have free-standing “rights” apart from a God who has endowed those “rights” leads to exactly the political disorder we see increasingly:

Every person, every special interest group now simply fights for its own interests within the political system, apart from any vision for the good of the whole—and we always reckon our own interests as more important than those of others; our own “rights” are always more evident than those of others

So politics remains merely the arena for all the competing self-interested, self-advancing lobbying groups and voting blocs and constituencies and unions and businesses and factions to fight it out to be sure they get what’s coming to them—the usual way of the world...

JX is commanding something very different: in His Church, we serve one another, give to one another freely, willingly, bec we know we have each received so freely from our Lord.

Our Lord has become slave to serve each of us; He went all the Way to the cross to *show* us the love of God when words and lesser deeds were not enough—we have received more than we can ever repay—but we get to try to repay thru our service to others, for Jesus’ sake

He has loved us and served us and forgiven us equally; this is why we serve others as equals

JX is teaching something far deeper than more effective jockeying and partisan politics, more effective religion and thinly-disguised self-service.

He has called us to Himself and then connected us together in mutual gratitude to Him—something v different from the way of the world

“What everybody knows” is not good enough.

--See how the world has managed throughout the centuries, the millennia, trusting the usual ways of relating to one another.

--See where “politics as usual” is getting the US, is getting the world of nations

--See how well your old way of living your life has served you.

JX shows us, teaches us, commands us, His Church, a better Way.

“If you all *know* these things [I have taught you] then you are blessed if you *do* them.” [v 17]

He alone teaches us and shows us a Way more effective than what we already knew before

He alone, thru His Holy Spirit, guides us and indwells us and empowers us not only to *know* His heart, His worldview, His love, His very peculiar Way,

but to live in it; to *do* what He commands us to do.

Everybody knows that Jesus is nice, and the church provides a good moral foundation for raising the children, and that Xy is as good as the next religion, and it helps to have faith for when hard times come.

Thank God, you here tonight—not the multitudes, the crowds we’ll see worshipping across the land come Sunday morning—

Thank God you know that it’s only when we understand that “what everybody knows” is incomplete or just wrong that we create space in our minds and hearts for Jesus our Savior.

It's when we recognize God's intention is to remake us from the inside out that we can ask His Spirit to abide in us;

It's when we choose to obey God before we completely understand that we are able to daily deny ourselves, (and our old definition of what's best for us and for the world), and serve our neighbor, and take up His cross of personal and corporate obedience wherever His Way may lead.

You know there's no safe ground from which to observe life. If "what everybody knows" is good wisdom, then Jesus is crazy.

Everybody knows you should "look out for #1"

JX says you're already lost if you sever #1 from Him and His people

Everybody knows you should follow the path of success

JX says you are to obey Him and trust Him to define and keep re-defining your path

Everybody knows you shouldn't get carried away with "too much religion"

JX says "I want every aspect of you—yr mind yr heart, yr spirit; yr memories, yr dreams, yr wounds; yr relationships, yr treasure; yr past, yr present, yr future, and I will love and heal and redeem and set free every aspect of you."

Thanks be to God, you do not know "what everybody knows."
You know the risen Lord.

