**Maundy Thursday Year A 2020**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

We have been reading from John’s Gospel the last several weeks, so I think it helps us to revisit the familiar words of the prologue of John…. It’s quintessential Classical Greek thought… that is, I mean, Platonic thought… that though mysterious to be sure, there is an intimate relationship between heaven and earth… between the divine and the natural world… You will recall from your Greek mythology, the gods of Olympus are forever making forays into the earthly realm… For Plato the things in earth are reflections of things in heaven… that is, if we are paying attention, we may grasp the heavenly in the common things of earth… that all things in earth are of the same substance, as it were, of the things of heaven… All things under God’s aegis, which are all things; all things are of the Logos, the Word… the Logos, the divine Word that is the coherence, the defining principle, the truth of the created order entire… Jesus, for the scribes of this Gospel, is the manifestation of God in earth… he the Logos, the Word from the source of all that is… this divine word made flesh and blood… he the ordering principle, the coherence of the mystery that is creation…. So this gospel is an attempt to describe what God looks like in the flesh… the philosophical truth of the universe.

But despite this radical intimacy between heaven and earth proclaimed by this gospel… The institutional church over the ages has insisted on an all-powerful, all knowing Deity, wholly other from creation… a ruler who judges humanity down below, who must be appeased for the shortcomings of men and women… A God who requires sacrifices and offerings… Indeed the church has propounded the concept of substitutionary atonement… that God required the torture and death of God’s Son so as to wipe away the sinful wretchedness of humanity… This is the God who answers selective prayers, ignoring others… a God who punishes with hurricanes and disease the sinful… we laugh… but there are many so-called Christians who believe that. This is a god to be feared… People, as we well know, can be controlled by fear.

But at least according to the writer we call John, that is not who God is… God comes into the world full of grace and truth; God comes as one of us bearing the one light… and that the light of heaven is the light of humankind, God’s beloved people…. And that light that we carry is the light of Love…. Love the fleshly thing of earth that smacks of heaven…. An astounding revelation.

So for John, God is not an all-powerful ruler aloof in God’s heavenly palace… Our God is a God who washes feet… that is the metaphor John uses in his gospel… an image of humility and vulnerability and sacrifice… an image of solidarity with one’s brother, one’s sister… Our God quite literally bows to the feet of God’s beloved, bringing honor, worth, and dignity… it is quite the reversal of what we have been taught over the centuries…. Our God is a God of sacrifice, of self-giving… not a God at the top of an intractable hierarchy… And God doesn’t act in massive displays of power and magic… Our God acts in the many small acts of love… like the washing of tired and dirty feet… feet that have trod the stony and rough roads of poverty and violence, of loneliness, and exclusion… God is one who welcomes the traveler of rough roads… Our God is only moved to sacrifice… because that is what love does… Love is always giving itself away for the good of the other… And that of course is what Jesus’ life and ministry is all about… sacrifice for the good of all, even at the expense of his life… this is the truth that gives coherence to human life; orders all things…. Because when all is said and done in this short life, what else is there? …what else holds true? …what else endures? It is love that stands in the end… It is the washing of the feet of our neighbor that is the final word… It is what Jesus told us to do, for our sake and for the sake of the world… a simple truth, however mundane…. Have love for one another…. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, Judas his betrayer included… Dear brothers and sisters… go and do likewise.