

Sermon for Maundy Thursday

“You shall keep the lamb until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.”

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Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the idols of mankind, these things born of human manufacture and imagination be destroyed. These created things in which we trust; these shall be no more. For it is written: *‘On all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgments.’*

The gods of Egypt are all we know; the gods of wealth, prosperity, fertility, pleasure, and ultimately, the gods of death; for to our heathen heart, death alone *delivers us from evil*, when all the other gods have failed to deliver to us delight.

It is to slay these idols that our Lord came into the world. It is by the torch of His light that He shall *cast out the darkness, and the darkness shall not comprehend it.* In many and various ways, He dispelled this all-consuming shadow during His ministry, by giving eyes to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, by healing the sick, and cleansing the unclean; by raising a friend from the dead, that we may know that God remembers His ancient bonds of friendship; that He never forsakes those whom He has loved, though His beloved so often betray Him; that we may know that *God is not a man, that He should lie.*

But all these little things, which we call miracles, are but an accommodation to our frail and dying souls, for even our Lord says, *‘It is a wicked and adulterous generation that asks for signs.’*

These miracles He did, that we may be without excuse when the day comes, when we will be asked to confess His name, or to deny it. That day, *the judgment of the world.*

The Lord has not come to rid us of blindness or sickness or misery; for these belong to the *poor in spirit, and the poor you shall have with you always.*

The Lord has come to judge sin, death, and the legions of hell. To strike down *all the gods of Egypt. That every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that the Lord your God, the Lord is One.*

In former times, He struck down the idols with a mighty hand, with mighty signs, plagues of blood and locusts and *darkness that could be touched*. But even these He only did, that the idolaters of Egypt, the enslavers of His people, might repent, that *Pharaoh might know that I am the Lord*. That a *wicked and adulterous generation might turn and be healed*.

None of these plagues delivered the people of Israel, for God Himself hardened Pharaoh's heart, that His people might know that it is not by such endless violence that their salvation is procured.

Rather, their salvation is procured by the flesh of a lamb that feeds, and by the blood of a lamb that washes. And all this prepared *at twilight*, that *weeping may be cast for the night, but joy come in the morning*.

For just as it is necessary that *a man die once, and face the judgment*, so is it necessary that *the Son of Man suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day*. The night must precede the day, even as *there was evening, and there was morning*.

Now twilight is upon us.

The hour has come for a Lamb to be slain, that His flesh may be eaten, and His blood purify the sick souls of sick men. Now, and unto all eternity. The sacrifice must be offered. What Cain and Abraham were unable to do, now shall be done. The offering of the spotless sacrifice, a Son of Man. Look then, upon the body and blood of the Lord at this sacred altar, and remember the faith of Isaac, when it was pronounced *'The Lord shall provide the sacrifice.'*

Yet before the Christ goes to His suffering, before He goes to complete His Father's will, He washes our feet, even as a harlot once washed His, for even as it is true that *a servant is not above his master*, so it is true that *the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve*.

The Lord asks us, *'Do you understand what I have done to you?'*

Indeed, we do not, for even He tells St. Peter, *'What I am doing for you, you*

cannot understand.'

Truly we do not, and we cannot, for we who know only sin cannot recognize pity, a pity born of love for that which is pitiable, and pitiable we are.

He does not expect us to understand. He expects us only to watch and *see that the Lord is Good. For none is good but God.*

He rises from the feet of His disciples of all ages, and *puts on his outer garment*, and leaves this house of men, that He might face His Passion. *And when he had gone out from the midst of the disciples, He said 'Now is the Son of Man Glorified.'*

'And He suffered under Pontius Pilate.'

Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Exodus 12:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32; John 13:1-17, 31-35.