



April 17 – Maundy Thursday

It was Christmas Eve, 2010, in the early afternoon when my mom called me. My grandfather had fallen down the stairs and was in the emergency room. They were not sure he would live. She was on her way there and was going through the family phone tree. A couple of days later, I was able to go to the hospital. It was the same day that many others in our family were able to go there. We each went in to see Boppie, that was our nickname for him, and we said our goodbyes.

When not in the hospital room, we were gathered in the waiting room. That had a very different vibe in it. Grief has a way of bringing out the best and worst in people. It started slowly, but pretty soon the tempers were in full view. Family members were bickering with one another. While we had the family disfunction (every family has some) on full display, Boppie's pastor arrived. He was also the campus pastor at the local university. He sensed the tension in the waiting room and responded, "It's tough being family sometimes." Truer words have been seldom spoken.

During this meal, Jesus is saying goodbye. He is gathering with his close friends and disciples one last time. I imagine that was an incredible difficult meal. We don't often think about that aspect of it. We focus on the celebration of the Passover. Which it was. But it is also Jesus' farewell. It is easy to imagine the difficulty the disciples are having even eating the meal. It is a charged environment.

It is into this setting that Jesus says that one of the people at the table will betray him. That's all it took for the disfunction to come into full view. The disciples start bickering. They are trying to figure out who it is, but that is largely because each wants to clear their own name. Many of them wondering if they have inadvertently betrayed Jesus. You can imagine the finger pointing in attempt to make someone else look more guilty. The focus moves away from Jesus departure and is focused on, in essence, family dynamics. It's tough being family sometimes.

None of them are perfect. Each person around the table brings their own flaws. These flaws are not ranked. There is not any one that is above another. All of them are gathered around the same table. It is in this context that Jesus breaks bread with them. Throughout the gospel according to Saint Luke, Christ is revealed in the breaking of bread, the sharing of a meal.

Jesus offers the bread and the cup to all of them. Judas is there. All of the disciples are there. All bringing their flaws, their drama, their desire to be right. They bring their grief, their shame, their inability to comprehend what is happening. Jesus sits with them, in the middle of all of the chaos and shortcoming and breaks bread with them. Jesus calls on them to remember, to remember this meal, to remember this love shared, each time they break bread together.

We find the same true here in this place. We gather around the table with Christ. Jesus invites us into this meal. None of us is perfect. Each of us has betrayed God in our own way. All of us fall short. We gather with our guilt, our shame, our joys, our fears, our shortcoming...everything. We arrive here and are welcomed by Jesus as our true selves, not the version we hope to be someday. We are welcome, and we receive this same meal. And as we gather and break bread, Christ is revealed in our midst.

As we share in this time together and the breaking of bread, may we too remember. May we remember the love that God has for all people. May we remember that God loves us, as we are. The world would love to distract us, make us look to one another and try to justify our presence by looking down on someone else. Don't be distracted. Look to Christ. Look to the bread broken, and the drink poured, and remember God's love for you, and for all. Amen.

Pastor Michael Schmidt