

Sermon for 2019 Yr C Maundy Thursday
Preached Thursday 4/18/2019 at St. James', Mount Vernon
By the Rev. Charles F. Brock

On Sunday I told you that during Holy Week I planned to ask the question, where is Jesus, through all of my Holy Week sermons. And that's what I still plan to do. But first, I want to ask you a question: where are you? Where are you right now?

Yes, of course you are here, seated in your pew. But more importantly, I think that I've got your attention, and so I'm pretty sure that I've got you here right now. Even when I see you seated before me, I don't assume that you are here. We are so easily distracted, and of course, the sermon time is well-known as a time to daydream, think about errands and tasks, and to let your attention wander to places known and unknown. Even when we think we are present to the world about us, we are usually living in the future or the past, thinking about what has happened to us or about what we want to do. It is very hard to be present, to hold yourself in the now. Even when we are present, we naturally drift away, only to catch ourselves someplace else.

So, on this Maundy Thursday, in this beautiful story from the Gospel according to John, where is Jesus? Yes, he is at supper with his disciples, but more importantly, he is present with them. He is present with them in sharing the meal, giving himself in the bread and the wine. He is present with them, tenderly holding and washing their feet. Nothing distracts Jesus from his love and compassion for these his friends and disciples... not even the looming shadow of betrayal, arrest, and death.

Jesus is fully present, making his presence known in the way that he cares for them, speaks to them, kneels before them and gently lays his hands on them. And he gives himself to his disciples, in humble vulnerability, not just as an example for us, not just as a sign of God's love for us, but in love, with the pure care and heart that Jesus has for those who have given their selves in order to follow him.

Tonight is a holy night. Jesus makes himself present to us, and in so doing he invites us to be present to him. That is where Jesus is, and where we are too. Jesus is present in the bread and the wine; he is present in the way we love one another; he is present in the divine life that is present in us all.

Amen.