

Maundy Thursday C
March 24, 2016
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St. Mark's Episcopal Church | Milwaukee, WI

It seems to me that we have a strange God. The Greeks had their gods of Sun and lightning bolts and the moon. The Norsemen had their one eyed Odin who demanded the devotion of the viking warriors. In Alaska, where I am grew up, many Alaska Native people venerated Raven—a creator and a trickster.

These gods seem a little strange to us Christians. But I submit that our God is stranger than all of these others. Because our God isn't very interested in thunder and war and kings. Instead, our God is a God of bread and wine and feet.

Our spiritual foremothers and forefathers gathered together—like we are tonight—to say the prayers, sing the songs and hear the scriptures that tell the story of Jesus' last days. In their wisdom, they shared a meal with one another. Somehow, they must have known that we learn more about God when we are eating together than we are eating alone.

Even so, the powers of the day thought them a little strange—just like their God. Our foremothers and forefathers came from every class and strata of society. They feasted with the poor and they feasted with women, outcasts, the sick and the dying. And they kept talking about this very strange God who is interested in the little things, the humble things—bread, wine, feet.

Our God might be a little strange, but I also know that our God is powerful. So powerful that the powers of the day were afraid of these little gatherings. The early Christians didn't have swords or tanks or drones. They didn't need them. They had a God who taught them that, no matter what: Break bread. Drink wine. Wash feet. Remember me. And on the basis of these instructions, the earliest Christians scared chief priests and emperors alike.

The world knows that we are a little strange. And they know that we are a little bit dangerous when we all come together in radical love, radical hospitality, radical welcome to the stranger.

Every week for the Christian is a walk with Jesus. But this week we participate in that walk with great care, intention and deliberation. We walk slowly, paying attention to the feel, the look, the sounds of our religious observance.

Time gets a little funny during Holy Week. We are here tonight—the people of St. Mark's in Milwaukee. But we are also there, in the room with Jesus, as he gives his strange instructions to all his followers. Break bread. Drink wine. Wash feet. And when you do these things, the world will know that you are followers of Jesus. And the great forces of the world that seek to harm and destroy the children of God will begin to run scared. Because our God is a bit strange. But our God is also interested in the little things that change lives, that change the world. Amen.