

## ***KNOWING WHEN THE TIME HAS COME***

***(John 13:1-17, 35)***

I don't know about you, but I tend to hate it when the time comes to do something that I don't really want to do:

- Perfect example, is when my alarm rings in the morning, and it's time to get up (because I'm not retired like a lot of people I know)! I tend to hate it when that time has come.
- Getting the car repaired, making difficult phone calls, keeping up with email, doing homework, trying to comfort a family in their deepest grief, going shopping, getting caught in rush-hour traffic, did I say keeping up with email—I tend to hate it when the time has come for those things to happen.

BUT, I know when it's time to do those things! And when the time comes, I let out a deep and audible sigh . . . and look around to see if there is any way to escape . . . and then I go and do the thing that I am supposed to do but don't want to do.

Because I know that no matter how I may or may not feel about it, *the time has come.*

That strikes me on this Maundy Thursday evening, because in the first sentence of our yet-to-be-read gospel lesson, it says *“Jesus knew that his hour had come...”*

The coming hour of Jesus is something that John the gospel writer had been holding us in suspense about since one of the opening stories of this gospel:

- In the 2nd chapter of John, in the story about the first miracle of Jesus, at Cana, when he turned water into wine; early in the story, when his mother told him that the wine had run out—clearly expecting him to do something about it, in that inimitable motherly way—Jesus said to her *“My hour has not yet come.”*
- In the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, when the authorities were trying to arrest Jesus in the temple, the gospel says *“but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.”*

- In the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, when Jesus was publicly saying things that were considered by Jewish law to be blasphemous, the scriptures say that even though he was saying these things in the midst of the temple, *“no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.”*

Oh, but now; on the Thursday evening before the Passover festival on Friday evening, John tells us that *“Jesus knew that his hour had come... to depart from this world, and go to God.”*

I don't think it was the “going to God” part that was going to be the difficult part of that proverbial “hour” for Jesus. I think it was *the road of violence* that Jesus knew he had to traverse; and *the streets of suffering* that Jesus knew was between here and there; and *the highways of pain* that Jesus knew he was about to cross; and *the cross itself* Jesus knew he was about to bear . . .

Lord have mercy, that sure trumps having to get up when the alarm rings, and take care of some email!

All the times when Jesus knew that it WASN'T the time, that it WASN'T the hour;

NOW Jesus knew that the time and the hour had come . . .

## II.

But the arrived hour was not meant to bring, through Jesus, only a roadmap for DEATH;

it was also meant to bring, through Jesus, a roadmap for LIFE!

RIGHT IN THE MIDST of the powers of evil putting into the heart of Judas to betray the Son of God—perhaps the most infamous and tragic betrayal in the world (except for maybe the last betrayal that happened to YOU)—Jesus countered with a completely un-heard of, out-of-the-box, completely un-orthodox, practically scandalous, and definitely embarrassing gesture of the power and meaning of *loving one another*.

Because in the midst of all that was happening, Jesus knew that the time had come for just that.

Because Jesus knew that all the things he had tried to teach the disciples were not all getting through to them; he knew that their understanding of his radical concepts and interpretations of scripture were still fairly limited; he knew that the ways of God turned the ways of the world upside down and topsy-turvy, and that it required a new perspective that for some was a bit difficult to come by—given cultural socialization and all.

But Jesus—knowing that the time had come—knew that the time included one more big, whopping, unforgettable lesson on loving one another.

### **III.**

The washing of feet during the historical time of Jesus was something that was reserved for servants, or wives. It was a customary form of hospitality, but one that was to be performed by one with the lowest standing. For your rabbi or your teacher to take up a basin and a towel to wash your feet was an un-heard of abomination! That's why Peter

dared to react so strongly to Jesus when he said “Lord, you will NEVER wash my feet!”

But Jesus was able to convince Peter that “the time has come.” The time has come for something so different, and so radical, and such a sheer demonstration of the love we are to show one another, that it would be unforgettable!

Because in that act of servant-leadership that Jesus lovingly performed among his disciples that evening was a *self-emptying* that is a precursor to truly being able to love another. It is an act that is the result of *surrendering* one’s self for the sake of another; of *evacuating* one’s self for the sake of another; of *denying* yourself for the sake of someone else who is not you—but who God made a PART of you; of being willing to *give up or let go of* who you are and who you think you are, or what you have earned and what you think you have earned, or what you believe and what you think you believe . . .

Because an act of love like Jesus did can obliterate the barriers and social status and race and gender and nationality and ethnicity and all kinds of others things between us.

Because that is what love does.

And the time has come for that love to happen, initiated by the followers of Jesus.

The time has come for we as the followers of Jesus to wash the feet of those who live in poverty, and those who are homeless, by providing living wages, just social systems, and affordable housing.

The time has come for we as the followers of Jesus to wash the feet of those who are vulnerable, and exploited, and destitute and needy, by having compassion, and making room in our society for their uplifting, and their healing, and their progress.

The time has come for we who are followers of Jesus to wash the feet of our citizens of color, by evacuating the tenets and practices of white supremacy, and emptying ourselves of race discrimination, by squarely

facing the issues, and realizing that equality is a value of God's kingdom.

The time has come for we as the followers of Jesus to wash the feet of women by doing away with gender inequality, and realizing and reversing the ways we are all held captive by patriarchal power.

The time has come for we as followers of Jesus to wash the feet of our children, by recognizing them, protecting them, and holding up their needs as holy before God.

The time has come for we as followers of Jesus to stand with the LGBTQI community, and all who are not heterosexual, by not turning a blind eye and deaf ear to their cries to be heard and respected, and not battered, raped and murdered.

Jesus knew when his time had come.

And that was also the beginning of the coming of OUR time.

When it comes to radical and un-heard of acts of love,

our time has come.

Amen.