

“Between Power & Humility”

Luke 22:1-27

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church

April 2, 2026 (Maundy Thursday)

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The tension was building as Jesus gathered for the Passover meal with his disciples. He knew that his hour had come to depart from this world. Within the last few days, he had led a provocative parade down the Mount of Olives, mocking the triumphal processions of Rome. He had caused a public disturbance at the temple, driving out those who were buying and selling and turning over the tables of the money changers. Folks at the top of both the religious establishment and the Roman government were getting more and more concerned about Jesus and his ragtag band of followers. It wasn't looking good for him. It was only a matter of time until they would finally get rid of this rabble-rouser, or so they thought.

And what did Jesus do as he sensed that the end was near? Did he leave the dangers of Jerusalem to go back to Galilee where he would be safe? No. Did he assemble an army to fight his enemies? No. On that night – the night when Judas would betray him – the night before he would die – he joined his disciples for the Passover meal. On that ominous night, Jesus sought the companionship and the comfort of his friends around the supper table.

What he did as they reclined at the table together was most unexpected. We read in the Gospel of John that Jesus took off his outer robe, wrapped himself in a towel, and washed his friends' feet. That's pretty much the last thing we would expect, isn't it? Up until then, it was Jesus' disciples who had sat at *his* feet – it was household servants who had washed his feet – it was a woman named Mary who had anointed his feet with a precious ointment. But on the night before his death, Jesus became the one who served. On that night, when he knew he was about to

die, Jesus demonstrated power through humility. On that night, feeling the loneliness and fear that he had every right to feel, Jesus chose to be with the community, including Judas, the one who would betray him. With his friends, Jesus demonstrated love in action. And he gave them a commandment – a mandate – that they love others as he had loved them – that they serve others as he had served them.

These are the mandates of this holy night: Eat this bread. Drink this cup. Let Jesus wash your feet. And love and serve one another, not in order to win favor with God, but because of the love we have already received that pours forth in community.

Let the church say, Amen.