

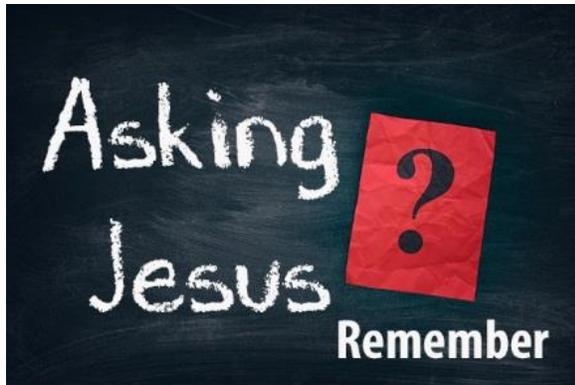
Title: Asking Jesus: Remember

Date: April 13, 2017

Preaching: Senior Minister Randy Spleth

Text: [John 13:1-20](#)

E-mail: [Randy Spleth](#)



"Do you know what I have done to you?" It is the first question of the night on a night of filled with questions. Jesus asks it in the upper room while at the table but it echoes through the night. "Do you know what I have done to you?" (John 13:12) As always, when Jesus asks a question, it is for your sake, not his.

It's not the first question of that day.

Earlier, the disciples ask Jesus "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" (Mark 11:12) Timing is everything and the timing of this question is off. With the city jammed full of pilgrims, you don't look for a room the day of your celebration. What were the disciples thinking? As we've learned, Jesus often answers a question with a question and here again, he doesn't disappoint. But the question comes within an answer. He says "Go in the city and find the man carrying water." That would be easy to do because carrying water was normally a woman's job. "Ask him this question. "The Teacher asks, 'Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" (Mark 14:14) He'll show you the room. Jesus clearly pre-arranged a room; in doing so, he saved the disciples embarrassment. He could have and perhaps should have asked "Do you know what I have done for you?"

The Passover meal started at sundown, perhaps around 7:00 in the evening. It's a lengthy ritualistic meal to remember the journey from slavery to deliverance, to remember that God had redeemed them. Symbolically, you start out as a slave and at the end of the night free."¹

Sometime during the meal, Jesus gets up and takes off his garment. This left him in a tunic, a short garment like an undershirt, the garment that servants in that day wore to serve a meal. He physically dresses like the servant he becomes. He goes around the table, washing the feet of the disciples, even over the protests of Peter and then, puts his robe back on, sits down and offers the question of the evening, "Do you know what I have done to you?"

Hands still wet from the water he used to wash their feet, the question still hanging in the room, Jesus says, "One of you will betray me." (Mark 14:18) They erupt with their own questions, 'Surely, not I?' the disciples asked." (Mark 14:19) And in one of rare occasions that Jesus answers a question directly, he says, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me" (Mark 14:20). It is an understatement. The story of the betrayal winds its way through the rest of the evening. Before the night is over, Judas would betray Jesus; Peter would deny him; and the disciples would desert him, leaving Jesus alone to face a trial at the hands of his enemies.

After announcing his betrayal, Jesus took the matzah used earlier in the Seder and blessed it again. But what he said next left his disciples perplexed. As he broke the matzah and handed it to his disciples, he said, "Take, eat; this is my body." (Matthew 26:26) They ate. Then Jesus took a cup—likely the third of the four cups of wine the disciples would have drunk, the cup of blessing. And after he blessed it again, he offered it saying "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:28) They do; he could have asked the question again, "Do you know what I've done to you?" They would have simply shaken their heads no. They couldn't possibly know that Jesus body was really going to be broken. That his blood was really going to be shed. The journey from slavery to deliverance was being transformed and made personal. It was about being enslaved by sin and death and delivered by grace.

According to John, in the next hour or so, Jesus teaches and asks questions. When Jesus tells them that he is leaving and they can't go with him, Peter protests with a question, "Lord, why can I not follow you now?" Jesus answers the question with a question. "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times." (John 13:38)

He gives them a mandate to love one another as he has loved them. He offers comfort and encourages them to believe in God's promise asking "If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" (John 14:2)

They are confused and Philip says so. Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" (John 14:9-10) He teaches more about who he is and what is to come and then, asks, "Do you now believe? (John 16:31) It's like the question at the beginning of the evening, "Do you know what I've done to you?"

He prays for what is ahead, they sing a hymn and leave the Garden of Gethsemane. As they enter, Jesus leaves behind the disciples and takes Peter, James, and John with him a bit farther into the garden. When alone with the three, Jesus reveals that he is deeply grieved, even to the point of death. He asks them to stay awake and keep watch. He then went a few paces farther and "threw himself on the ground" and prays in agony about what was before him. After a short time, he comes back and found them sleeping and he asks a question. "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?" (Matthew 26:40) He leaves them and prays again for God to make clear His will. He returns and again finds them asleep. It happens third time and he asks the question again. "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?" He tells them to get up because his hour is at hand.

As a crowd of soldiers and police from the chief priest approach, Jesus, narrates the story of his arrest by asking questions. He steps forward and asks "Who are you looking for?" (John 18:4)

Again, "Who are you looking for?" (John 18:7)

Then, "Have you come with swords and clubs to arrest me, as though I were a thief?" (Mark 14: 48)

And, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" (Luke 22: 48)

Peter tries to intervene, pulling a sword. Jesus tells him to put it away and then returns to asking questions.

"Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?" (John 18:11)

Or do you think that I'm not able to ask my Father and he will send to me more than twelve battle groups of angels right away? But if I did that, how would the scriptures be fulfilled that say this must happen?" (Matthew 26: 53-54)

Jesus was bound by the soldiers and the disciples took flight. Jesus stood watching as all his disciples deserted him, I wonder if the question came to mind. "Do you know what I've done to you?"

They take him to the house of the high priest Caiaphas who begins to ask Jesus about his teaching and his disciples. Jesus, answers his questions with a question. "Why do you ask? (John 18:21) One of the police strikes him and saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Another question to be answered with a question, "Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" (John 12:23)

While the questioning is going inside the house, questioning was going on outside in the courtyard. Peter was challenged three different times about his relationship with Jesus. Each time, he denied being a disciple of Jesus. On third time, as predicted, the cock crowed and Peter remembered the word of the Lord. Which words? Words about the cock crowing or the question that began the evening. "Do you know what I have done to you?"

I think likely it was both but the question is more penetrating than the prediction. Do you know what I have done to you?

Go back to that room and see Jesus take the basin and towel and begin working his way around the table, unlacing a sandal and gently lifting a foot in a basin, washing each foot to clean. I have looked carefully in my Bible, looked at multiple translations. I have never found one translation that reads, "Jesus washed all the disciples' feet except the feet of Judas. I couldn't find one. It's not there.

Within hours of being washed cleaned, Judas is betraying with a kiss, Peter is denying as the cock crows, the rest have deserted him. Do you know what I've done to you? He forgave their sin before they even committed it. He offered mercy before they even sought it." ² It is not surprising that Jesus asks this question and then says "Remember." Remember what I have done for you and remember this meal that I have transformed for you.

Do you know what I have done to you? Jesus changed you. He transformed the Passover into Communion. Just as the Passover meal says, once we were slaves but now we are free, followers of Jesus, come to the table, remembering that we were slaves to sin and death. We leave the meal free, accepting Jesus' grace and mercy in our lives. Just as the Passover meal is connected to a sacrificed lamb and blood on the frame of a door, so the bread and wine is connected to the Lamb body and blood, nailed to a cross.³ The answer to the question is found in the two.

Years ago there was a service of Remember, an artistic attempt to connect the question of the evening with table and the cross. The entire service was led by clowns, and everything was in pantomime, with a background of Scott Joplin ragtime music. The mountaintop moment was when a beautifully wrapped gift was presented to the head clown; big letters on the bright box announced "From God."

The clown opened the gift from God and took out a long loaf of bread. He unwrapped it, examined it, and cradled it like a baby. He walked it up and down the aisle. The congregation could imagine the baby growing as he did that. A toddler, a youth, a man. At the clown's direction, the congregation applauded the presence of this gift among them. Then the clown took out a long railroad spike, jammed it through the bread, and nailed it to a wooden cross on the communion table. There hung the bread from God. The clown

fell to his knees and cried. Then he reached up, broke off half the loaf from the cross, and with it served them communion. ⁴They ate and drank and as they did, they had a new insight as they answered the question, “Do you know you what I have done to you?”

Yes, Lord, we do and we even know what we are to do for you.
Remember.

¹ BRUMBERG-KRAUS, JD. 'Not by bread alone...': the ritualization of food and table talk in the Passover Seder and in the Last Supper. *Semeia*. 86, 165-191, 1999. ISSN: 0095-571X.

² Max Lucado, “With Towel And Basin.” From *Just like Jesus*, Copyright 1998.

³ Hamilton, Adam. *24 Hours That Changed the World*, Expanded Large Print Edition (pp. 26-27). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Allen Brinsdisi ,http://dcpc.org/sermons/Sapphire_Stome_and_Sacrament.html.