

In the Exodus lesson, we listened to extensive directions given to the Hebrews about how to prepare and eat the first Passover, the night when God killed every first-born of Egypt except those in houses, Hebrew houses, with lamb's blood on the doorposts and lintel. Those Hebrew houses, God *passed over*. The story closes with the command to "observe it (the Passover) as a perpetual ordinance." We all know the story continues with the Hebrews finally escaping Pharaoh's grasp, wandering in the desert, receiving the Ten Commandments, and after 40 years, finally arriving in the Promised Land. All this happened because they were in a covenant relationship with God

Tonight's Gospel took place as the feast of the Passover is about to begin. Jesus and his disciples had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. There is a lot of evidence that Biblical stories of the last supper were not the actual Passover—never-the-less, Jesus and his companions shared a festive meal. As they are eating together, Jesus flips the narrative, not once, but twice. The first flip we heard in Corinthians tonight. Paul repeats what Matthew, Mark, and Luke recorded in their Gospels. "Drink this! This is my blood of the new covenant. Just like that, Jesus changed the covenant that had stood for 1200 years between God and the Hebrew people. From now on they would celebrate the relationship between God and his people with bread and wine

Did you notice that the Gospel that I read a few minutes ago doesn't speak of Jesus sharing the bread and wine as the other Gospels do? That's because the Gospel of John was the last of the four to be written. The writer or writers apparently

were familiar with the other Gospelers work. They felt some pieces had been left out, and chose to include stories no one else had told; this is one of them

What an important story this one is! Living in the 21st century, it's easy to miss the way the narrative is flipped. There have been many social and cultural differences between our time and the first century. The disciples and others had been following Jesus for about three years. Do you remember when this Covid pandemic started? That was three years ago. Even though they had been with him three years, many of his followers still envisioned the promised Messiah as a king, a power wielder, a leader, or a ruler in the mold of their historic kings, David and Solomon, or current rulers of Palestine, Pontius Pilate and King Herod. Some Biblical historians claim Judas betrayed Jesus because he'd become frustrated that Jesus had not already overthrown Roman rule

Up to this point Jesus didn't fit that mold, but the disciples were still shocked when their would-be Messiah took the role of foot washer. Foot washing was a daily necessity in Biblical times; shoes were simple sandals and roads were dirt paths—especially in backwater parts of the Roman Empire like Palestine

Did you know that in Biblical times there was a lower status than slave? And foot washing was relegated to HER, the female slave. Jesus was doing a slave-WOMAN's work! That flips the expectations of the disciples upside down. Simon Peter could not bear it and refused! But Jesus gently explained the importance of Peter letting his feet be washed in order to be part of him. Then there is the silliness

about, “Also wash my head and my hands,” that ends in “Not all of you are clean,” a subtle reference to Judas

As Jesus returns to the table he explains further, that they need to serve each other (by washing each other’s feet). Then he closes with the new commandment, “love one another,” because this is how “everyone will know that you are my disciples

Tonight 2000 years later, we will once again wash each other’s feet. To be honest, whether I’m the washer or the washee, foot washing feels very intimate and invades my space a little. In contemporary language, it “forces me out of my comfort zone.” But I think that is exactly the point. After all, what force compels the God of the universe to be humiliated, and do the work of the lowest servants, in order to be reunited with us? In a few minutes it will be time for foot washing. I invite you to “step out of your comfort zone” with me because I believe that is part of how we fulfill the command, “Love one another