



Lakeside Sermons

Lakeside Baptist Church • Rocky Mount, North Carolina
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MARCH 29, 2018
MAUNDY THURSDAY
MY HEART AS SANCTUARY, MY LIFE AS PRAYER

My Life as Prayer
Exodus 12:1-14; John 13:1-17, 31b-35

It was a Prayer they nailed to the cross,
a living,
breathing,
bleeding,
dying Prayer.

It was a Prayer
that spoke honestly
the fear of abandonment
and the doubt of Fatherly commitment.

It was a Prayer that winced
at the thrust of a spear.
It wept
at the brokenness of a mother's heart.
It rallied because of a brother's love.

Though mocked as vain and empty,
the Prayer breathed forgiveness
to the soldiers dividing its clothes
and hope
to the thief on his right.

It was a Prayer that sighed
beneath the weight of the world
and became silence.

Long ago the Prayer had breathed
over the warm vapors
of a yet-unborn world.
Happy, hopeful, creative sighs
became
light and darkness,
day and night,
seasons and sand dollars,
pines and petunias,
robins and raptors,
dogs and donkeys,
fish and farmers,
wanderers and wonderers.

The Prayer tickled
the hearts and minds
of the farmers and wanderers and wonderers
who searched for the source of the words.
“Yahweh, Elohim,”
the Prayer whispered:
The Lord God.

For years and years and more and more years,
the Prayer danced around campfires,
cried at weddings,
sang at funerals,
laughed at sunshine
and embraced the rain.

But the farmers and soldiers and carpenters and weavers
sometimes ignored the Prayer.
The wanderers and the wonderers
sometimes listened to other whispers.
The Prayer did not always give what they asked.
It often asked more than they would give.

So the Prayer said a single,
simple word:
Jesus.
And the ones who listened heard, “He saves!”

Now the Prayer had form and function.
It looked like
the farmers and soldiers and carpenters and weavers.
It understood
the wanderers and wonderers.
The Prayer sounded
like the women at the well,
the children in the street,
the priests in the temple,
the ladies of the night,
the lepers in the camp,
and the robbers around the corner.

The Prayer was hugs of welcome
and touches of healing.
It was songs of mercy
and u-turns of repentance.
It was eating and sleeping
and loving and working.
It was more doing than speaking,
more action than words.
The Prayer was more being
than talking,
more truth than lies.

Some of the farmers and soldiers and carpenters and weavers
heard the Prayer.
Some of the wanderers and wonderers understood at last.
Some of the children and ladies and priests and lepers
memorized the words.
But not everyone listened.
Not everyone cared.
Not everyone payed attention
when the Prayer spoke without words.

On a solemn night of memory,
much like this night tonight,
the Prayer bowed to the feet of friends.
With water slipping between fingers to toes,
the Prayer washed away grit and grime,
shame and fear,
ignorance and apathy,
despair and grief.

In the splash of the water
and the rustle of the cloth,
They heard clearly,
“Do as I do.
Be as I am.”

Words no longer necessary,
The heart of the Prayer opened wide
to lament and grieve,
to accept and then rejoice.

When the Prayer spoke again,
it was in many tongues.
And myriads of hearts
heard the same simple word:
Love,
for the Prayer had a new name.

It was a Prayer they nailed to the cross,
a living,
breathing,
bleeding,
dying,
living-again Prayer.

And if we
farmers and soldiers and carpenters and weavers,
children and ladies and priests and lepers,
wanderers and wonderers all will listen,
we will hear the Prayer whispered in our own hearts:
“Love one another.
Just as I have loved you,
you also should love one another.
For your life is prayer,
and my prayer is love.”