

## **Maundy Thursday (2020)**

(St. John 13:1-15)

*“When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”*

From the world’s perspective, it appeared Jesus’ death was beyond His control, that He was a “victim of circumstance.” This is not so.

Everything that happened to Jesus in His Passion and Death was part of the fulfillment of God’s perfect design for man’s redemption.

We may not yet fully understand this, yet it is true.

Throughout the Gospels Jesus tells us He knew how His life would end.

To Nicodemus He said “...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” (St. John 3:14)

He knew He was born to die as the perfect Sacrifice for the world’s sins.

In St. John 10:11 He declared “*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*”

Jesus did not die one moment before the Father’s appointed time, or by any other means than by the Father’s appointed means.

In St. John 10:18 Jesus said “*No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*”

His final words from His cross were “*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*” In other words, “*Father, I willfully surrender my spirit into thy care.*”

Only when the Scriptures concerning Him had been fulfilled, the Father’s justice had been satisfied, and the work of salvation was finished, only then did Jesus willfully dismiss His Spirit, entrusting it into His Father’s hands.

His life was not taken from Him.

At the Father’s appointed time Jesus obediently and freely gave it up.

What was true in Jesus’ life can be true in ours.

We too can so submit ourselves to the Father’s will and live in confident assurance that nothing that occurs in our life is outside of God’s will, which is to save us eternally in Christ.

When trials come; trials such as the one we are experiencing with this pandemic, we can pray “*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*”

If we, as Jesus did, submit ourselves to the Father’s will, His purpose for us will be fulfilled, just as Jesus’ purpose was fulfilled.

We will be confident that we truly are the Father’s “...workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

Our daily lives will become focused upon fulfilling the Father’s will, to the glory of Jesus and the building up of His Body, the Church.

For this to happen, a transaction must occur. A decision has to be made.

We must take hold of the grace we are given in the Sacraments, and through the Word and prayer, and by an act of will working by faith, die to ourselves and live in and for Christ.

We must surrender our will to the Father, in exchange for His will for us.

As Jesus gave Himself up to be the sacrifice for sin, we must surrender ourselves as living sacrifices to be used as God wills; never looking back or counting the cost.

With St. Paul we must say “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*”

As we do, we will gain assurance that nothing that happens in our life, both “good” and “bad” (as the world sees it), is beyond the Father’s control.

We will know that all things are working together for good, because we love God and called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

We will be able to say “Father, into Thy hands I commend my life.”

This transaction is exemplified by St. Peter.

In the Garden, Jesus told Peter to watch and pray so he would not fall to temptation. Instead he slept. Hours later he denied Jesus three times.

But Peter repented, surrendered his own will for the Father's, and from that day forward was crucified with Christ.

After the resurrection along the Sea of Tiberius Jesus told him "*Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.*"

Years later, St. Peter was placed on a literal cross in Rome. He was not crucified for sins; his own or anyone else's. He was crucified as a testimony of doing the Father's will for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When it happened, he was not a victim of circumstance. He was an obedient servant of Jesus Christ, submitted to the Father's will.

Jesus lived His entire life in accord with His Father's will.

He knew His suffering was the Father's will and that He would not die until the Father had been glorified in and through His life.

We too can live with that kind of assurance.

But first we must, by grace through faith, take part in the transaction.

We must submit our will to the Father's will, take up our cross as St. Peter did, and follow Jesus.

We must do this today.

***In the Name of the Father... Amen.***