

LENT: A TIME TO FOLLOW JESUS TO THE CROSS

Maundy Thursday
April 21, 2011

Exodus 12:1-4 [5-10] 11-14
Psalm 116:1, 12-17
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Discerning God's Plan for Your Life

Some years ago, while riding in a New York City subway car, I looked up from my seat to see an ad for a book. The book purported to be able to give its readers the tools to create the life they desired by following a prescribed number of steps. In bold letters next to a replica of the book's cover, readers were encouraged to find out God's plan for their lives. Perusing both the ad and the book's title, I had to ask myself, "Does the one really have anything to do with the other?"

I have not read this book, so I cannot make any comments on its usefulness. I would hope, though, that if you followed the author's instructions, you would indeed achieve a life more like the life you want to live. But that is discovering *your* plan for your life. God might have something completely different in mind. Comfort might be our desire, but Jesus makes it clear that we are called to a life of service, and service is usually not very comfortable.

In John 13, Jesus sets for his disciples, and for us, an example of humble service. Getting on one's hands and knees to wash someone's feet is not a comfortable position for the washer, but it does show concern for the comfort of the one whose feet are being washed. That is service, but beyond that, when Jesus "...laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself," (John 13.4b, *KJV*) he was laying aside the things of the world and making himself open and vulnerable.

Jesus does not promise that if we follow his example we will be comfortable or achieve the life *we* desire. But, he does promise a joy that comes from serving God, serving others, and living in harmony with creation. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (John 13:17, *KJV*).

God's plan for your life is not revealed by following steps prescribed in a book advertised on the subway. It is revealed through meditation, prayerful discernment, and by an openness to the possible agony that goes with it, all the while knowing that joy is the promise in the end.

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This day we remember to pray: With thanks for Jesus' self-sacrificing love and for his modeling a life of service. May we follow his teachings and love one another just as he has loved us, and may we come to know the joy that he has promised.

Activity Corner: "In His Footsteps" Prayer

Supplies needed: Bible; 8-1/2" x 11" construction paper (assorted colors); scissor; pens or pencils. Trace your foot on a sheet of construction paper and then cut it out. Read Psalm 116:12-19. On one side of the "foot," copy verse 12. On the other side, compose a prayer that includes ways you will express your thanks to Jesus in response to his love for you and what acts of service you can do for others.