

Harriet Lindman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Harriet Lindman:

Welcome to Morning Prayers here at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning will be Reverend Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, welcome. Please rise in body, or in spirit, for a responsive reading of Psalm 27, found in your black psalter.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Congregation:

When evildoers assail me, uttering slanders against me, my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall.

Harriet Lindman:

Though a host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

Congregation:

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

Harriet Lindman:

For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent, he will set me high upon a rock.

Congregation:

Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence.

Harriet Lindman:

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Congregation:

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord!

Choir:

(singing)

Emmanuel Akyeampong:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Emmanuel Akyeampong:

I take my text from the Gospel of John, reading from chapter 13, verses two through eight, and I'm using the New King James version.

"And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are You washing my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.' Peter said to Him, 'You shall never wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.'"

The account of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples is found only in John's gospel. On the night on which he was betrayed, Christ would institute the Lord's supper, and the act of foot washing. How are these two events related? And what do we make of the spiritual exchange between Peter and Jesus?

For Peter, it was incomprehensible that his Lord and teacher would wash his feet, the role of a servant. Why did Jesus choose to wash his disciples' feet? What was Jesus trying to teach his disciples? I used Jesus' relationship with Peter to illuminate Jewish expectations of the Messiah, and how these cultural and historical expectations framed his disciples' understanding of Jesus's mission. The idea of the Messiah, a king who is the Lord's anointed, stretches back to the Old Testament. Though, in the Old Testament, the idea of the Messiah was not initially applied to the expectation of the unique king of the future.

Isaiah is the first prophet to refer to an extraordinary king of the future. With a rise of Assyria as the great world power, we find references to the Messiah as a unique personal ruler who would come from the House of David and bring special glory. The bitter experiences of a nation in exile, who deepen the conception of the Messiah, and his identification as the suffering servant of Nevi'im. The conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans in 63 BC, would encourage the nation of Israel to set its hope more firmly on God, and to look for a deliverer from the house of David.

That people in Jesus' time were living in anticipation of the Messiah is evident in the curiosity of people. Whether John the Baptist was the Messiah, which he denied.

As one of the earliest disciples, Peter had the advantage of a privileged relationship with Jesus. He was in from the very beginning. He had witnessed numerous miracles, and had himself walked on water, in imitation of Jesus. Peter was in no doubt that he was in the presence of the Lord's anointed. First, when Jesus asks the disciples at Caesarea Philippi, "Who do people say that I am? And finally, who do you say that I am?" Peter had responded without equivocation. "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus, perhaps assuming that this moment was at the front for the disciples, in the same chapter in Matthew, speaks for the first time about His coming death and resurrection. Peter immediately took Jesus aside and rebuked Him for His words, saying, "This shall never happen to you." Jesus would respond to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan. You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but of the things of man."

Yet, the disciples continued in the expectation that Jesus would rule an earthly kingdom as God's anointed king. Even as they headed to Jerusalem for that momentous week, which would begin with a triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Matthew has the mother of the Zebedee sons, James and John, coming to Jesus to us for a special favor. Grant, that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right hand and the other on the left in your kingdom. And in the same fateful week in Jerusalem, the disciples would argue among themselves as to which of them should be considered the greatest in the coming kingdom. Clearly, they still were not hearing Jesus about his mission, and His impending death and resurrection.

This is the context for the foot washing, a radical act of service that the others received in astonishment, and Peter initially resisted in protest. His skin could not wash his feet. Through foot washing, Jesus sought to break through the clouded perceptions of His disciples. His was not an earthly kingdom. There would be no division of positions. Jesus was signaling that, if there were to be His disciples, they were to imitate Him and not the world. Jesus did not set aside His authority as Lord and teacher to be a servant. He addressed them after the foot washing. "If I then your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet."

The other gospels speak of Holy Thursday as the day for the institution of the Lord's Supper. So just before His betrayal, trial, and crucifixion, the Lord washed His disciples' feet, to point to a different code of conduct. And introduce the Lord's Supper as a ritual of communion, remembrance, renewal, and the expectation of His return. The foot washing is a rite of conversion. The Eucharistic celebration is about new life. On this we'll be tested. May we be reminded of the deep significance of these two Christian rites. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Emmanuel Akyeampong:

Lord Jesus, as we leave this chapel this morning, inspire us by your example to serve humanity in a world greatly in need of love and sacrifice. Amen.

Harriet Lindman:

Please rise, in body or in spirit for prayer. And now we pray as Jesus taught us saying...

Congregation:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Harriet Lindman:

Please join in singing the hymn, My Song Is Love Unknown, number 150.

(singing)

And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Go in peace. Amen.

This transcript was exported on Apr 06, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Congregation:

Amen.