

out of the Gospel in good works. Without the Good News of what God does for us in Christ Jesus, the Law would have no purpose but to condemn.

And yet, there is partial truth to the News' portrayal. We heard it in the Gospel reading. Jesus did wash His disciples' feet. He did institute a new command to love one another. So here's the primary message for today. If someone asks you what the sermon was about here's what you should be able to say: we must always maintain the distinction between Law and Gospel. We must always rightly divide the two when we read the Bible, when we teach the Bible, and when we preach the Bible. This goes both ways. If I simply said that Maundy Thursday was *only* about the Gospel – what God does for us for Jesus' sake, then I would be in error. If I said Maundy Thursday was only about the institution of the Sacrament of the Altar and receiving the forgiveness of sins, I'd be omitting the law that Jesus also gives. I'd be omitting that Jesus institutes mandates around the reception of the Sacrament. He tells us to eat and drink it, not eat and dip it, for example, hence the practice of intinction not being a permissible practice. He teaches us to celebrate it often, not just once in a while so it remains extra special from our perspective.

Now I realize that a sermon or even a television program can only say so much in so little time. A sermon can only have one or two primary themes or else the hearer gets overwhelmed with information. We are also called by Christ to put the best construction on everything according to the 8th Commandment. We still, nevertheless must always distinguish between Law and Gospel. One without the other diminishes them both. Christ did institute a new command on this day. He taught the humility of service to others by way of example: He washed His disciples' feet. He was teaching that the Christian life is one of service to others. Doing good works is not optional. Those works just don't save us. They demonstrate that we are saved by God's grace through faith.

Receiving the Sacrament is for the benefit of both body and soul. But that's not where the story ends. Since it benefits us in body and soul, we are refreshed and rejuvenated to turn that benefit into works of service towards our neighbor. It doesn't necessarily mean washing someone's feet, though it certainly may. It means humbling yourself to serve your neighbor by helping and supporting their every physical need. Gospel and Law. Justification and sanctification. God declaring us holy with the forgiveness of sins. Act of God making us holy enabling us to lead godly lives with our works.

Jesus makes it clear in the text that as He has loved us, so also we are to love one another. His love is made clear in the Lord's Supper. Paul writes, **“For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes” (1 Cor 11:26)**. The Lord's death is the clearest expression of His love. **John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”** Jesus laid down His life for you. He gives you His very body and blood that was given and shed for you. The Lord's Supper is a meal of love; God's love for you.

Let Jesus' love have its way with you. Love begets love. Let His love for you generate love for others. As Jesus says, **“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35)**.

You are Christians. That's why you're here today. That means you are Jesus' disciples gladly hearing and learning His Word. Let others see the joy this brings you by the example you leave them to imitate in how you love them, serve them, and show them how to live the Christian life. Yet this example to imitate also includes running back to the Altar in humility to receive Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins in repentance and faith when you fall short of God's glory in sin. While our love isn't perfect, His love always is. In Jesus' name, Amen.