

Maundy Thursday – Love is Tough Work

“You are a part of me I do not yet know.” In the year 2020, Valarie Kaur, a member of the Sikh religious community, published her book, *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*. Kaur shares approaches to loving others, loving our opponents, and loving ourselves. *“You are a part of me I do not yet know.”*

In seeking to love others in whose company we find ourselves (whose life circumstances might be quite different than our own and with whom we would like to nurture deeper mutual understanding and support) – she invites readers **to wonder, to grieve, and to fight**.

In seeking to love opponents (a word she prefers to enemy), she encourages us **to rage, to listen, and to reimagine**.

And in seeking to love ourselves, Kaur invites us **to breathe, to push, and to transition** toward rebirth or newness in our lives.

I highly recommend Valarie Kaur’s book. Her words echo strongly for me this evening. *“You are a part me I do not yet know.”* Maundy Thursday is a day in the circle of the church year that resonates deeply with my soul’s connection to the love of God. Jesus offers a clarion call to love one another. We have the opportunity to accept (or not) his call to discipleship.

This evening, I invite us to affirm for ourselves and for one another that love is tough work. By tough, I mean that love can be both **rough, harsh** work and **sturdy, robust** work.

Let’s take a look at a few ways Jesus models the tough work of love. And I hope that we will each carry away from this evening one or maybe two specific ways in which we would like to more fully pattern our loving after the model Jesus offers.

We'll begin by joining Jesus and his closest friends at their evening meal.

Our capacity to love requires **willingness to be uncomfortable**. Jesus said to his disciples, *"If I – your Teacher and Sovereign – have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done for you."* With whom in your life (someone you know, an opponent, or yourself) do you need to practice moving within discomfort in order to love more fully?

Our capacity to love also requires **remembering**. Jesus said to his disciples, *"This is my body, which will be given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* With whom in your life (someone you know, an opponent, or yourself) do you need to practice not forgetting by remembering a formational experience (be it joyful or painful) in order to love more fully?

Our capacity to love also requires **humility and teachability**. Jesus said to his disciples, *"Let the greatest among you be like the youngest. Let the leader among you become the follower... For who is greater? The one who reclines at a meal, or the one who serves it? Isn't it the one reclining at table? Yet here I am among you as the one who serves you."* With whom in your life (someone you know, an opponent, or yourself) do you need to practice humility? Who needs to witness that you are open and willing to learn – even to shift your mindset – in order to love more fully?

Now let's shift to previewing ways we will see Jesus modeling the tough work of love when he prays in the garden later that same evening.

Our capacity to love requires **reaching out for support**. Jesus said to his closest friends, *"My heart is filled with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch."* With whom in your life do you need to practice reaching out for support in order to love more fully?

The age old say “it is more blessed to give than to receive” is a reminder that all of us long for opportunities to care for another. Do you offer others that opportunity by reaching out for support as Jesus did?

Our capacity to love also requires **naming points of pain**. Jesus cried to God (both inwardly and out loud). *“Abba, take this cup away from me. But let it be—not my will, but your will.”* With whom in your life do you need to practice naming points of pain in order to love more fully? Do you more need to practice this out loud with others or inwardly with yourself? Either way, naming points of pain can grow your capacity to love yourself and others.

Finally, our capacity to love requires **naming disappointment at being hurt**. Jesus asked his best friends, *“Could you not stay awake for even an hour?...The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* With whom in your life do you need to practice naming disappointment at being hurt in order to love more fully?

I find that love flourishes through discomfort, through remembering. That loves flourishes through humility and teachability. Love certainly flourishes through reaching out for support, through naming points of pain, and through naming disappointment at being hurt. Don’t we trust those with whom we can be most honest?

As we move further along the journey of this Holy Week, let’s stay open to wondering how we can more fully do this tough work of love, because God’s love is counting on working through us. Amen.

Rev. Clare Gromoll
St. Croix United Church (Bayport, MN)
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Jn 13:1-15, Lk 22:15-27, Jn 13: 33-35; Mark 14: 32-42