

Sunday, March 23, 2025
The Third Sunday In Lent

Solemn Evensong
4:00 pm

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A Sermon by
The Rev. Prisca Lee-Pae

on
2 Chronicles 4:1-6; John 13:1-15

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The Basin and the Water of Life

As we gather in this holy season of Lent, we are reminded of the inevitable truth that we all must one day leave this world and go to the Father. There is nothing more certain in life than this, yet accepting it is never easy. No matter how long we live, the realization of our mortality awakens us. When we truly understand that our time is limited, our priorities shift. The worries that once consumed us fade into insignificance. No one wants to waste their life meaninglessly.

And I know that those of you listening today care deeply about living a life of meaning, a life aligned with God's purpose. Lent is a time to reflect on this, to examine the direction of our spiritual journey, and to ensure we are walking the path God has set before us.

Throughout this Lenten season, we have been meditating on the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in relation to the Temple of Jerusalem. Today, we turn our focus to **the bronze basin and the use of water in the Temple**—symbols of cleansing, preparation, and holiness. As we reflect on these, we invite Jesus into our midst, knowing that in the Gospel of John, he was fully aware that his time had come to leave this world and return to the Father.

In John 13, we see Jesus, knowing that his crucifixion was near, choosing to show his disciples the **full extent of his love** by washing their feet. This act was not random—it carried deep significance. In the ancient Near East including Jewish society, it was customary for a servant to wash the feet of a master or guests upon entering a house. More than that, in the Old Testament, we read that priests were commanded to wash their hands and feet before entering the sanctuary and before offering sacrifices at the altar. God instructed Moses that Aaron and his sons must wash themselves before drawing near to the holy presence of God (Exodus 30:17-21). This act of washing was more than physical—it symbolized the spiritual purity required to stand before the Almighty.

In our Old Testament reading from 2 Chronicles, we heard a description of the Temple Solomon built on Mount Moriah. Among its features was the **molten sea**, a great bronze basin used for ritual purification. The water in this sea was for the priests to wash before they entered the sanctuary, ensuring they were ceremonially clean. The Second Temple, rebuilt after the exile, and later expanded under Herod, may not have had the same massive basin, but the principle of purification remained. Water was necessary to remind the priests—and all worshipers—that whatever was offered to God must be clean.

Thus, Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet carries two profound meanings. **First, it is the ultimate expression of love—a master humbling himself as a servant. Second, it mirrors the priestly purification before entering the holy presence of God.** Jesus, our Great High Priest, was preparing his disciples for the new covenant, not with the water of the Temple, but with the cleansing power of his love and sacrifice.

For Jesus, **the basin and the water were not just about physical cleansing but about the purification of the soul.** He took up a basin, filled it with water, and with his own hands washed the feet of his disciples. In doing so, he demonstrated that the greatest act of love is service, and the greatest preparation for God's presence is a heart made pure by love.

As disciples who have received this love, we are called to serve one another in the same way. In washing each other's feet—through acts of humility, kindness, and sacrifice—we participate in the cleansing love of Christ. Just as the priests washed to prepare themselves for worship, so we, as God's people, must continually be cleansed by love, grace, and the humility of Christ.

This theme of water and cleansing does not end with the Temple or the Upper Room. It continues in the life of the Church through the sacrament of **baptism**. In baptism, we are washed with water from the font—water that symbolizes purification, service, and love. Through it, we are reborn into the life of Christ.

I am reminded of my own son's baptism when he was just nine months old. It was a deeply meaningful moment, held at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, where my husband was serving as Canon at the time. Five clergy including my father-in-law who was a retired bishop, and my husband gathered around the baptismal font. The Diocesan bishop, despite his frail health at that time, insisted on holding my son himself as he baptized him. My son was quite heavy for his age, and we all watched with a mix of reverence and concern, hoping the bishop's strength would hold. But with firm and loving hands, the bishop held him tightly and poured the cleansing water over my son's head, marking him as Christ's own forever. That sacred moment was captured in a photograph, which still hangs in my 16-year-old boy's room — a reminder of God's unwavering grace and the lifelong journey of faith.

What about you? Do you have a moment that reminds you of God's purifying love? Perhaps your own baptism, or a time when you felt deeply cleansed by God's grace?

From the bronze basin of Solomon's Temple to Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet, to the waters of baptism in our churches today, we see a **consistent pattern of God's desire to purify us**—not just outwardly, but inwardly. It is God's love that cleanses us, that prepares us to stand in God's presence. And all of us, without exception, need that love.

If you have not yet been baptized, I invite you to do so at the Easter Vigil. If you know someone who has not yet been baptized, encourage them to take this step. For our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the **source of living water**—water that never runs dry, water that satisfies every thirst, water that gives eternal life. As Jesus himself said, "Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst" (John 4:14).

Each one of us is a temple of God. And within us, there is a basin filled with the water of Christ's love. How will you use the water in the basin within you? Will you use it to serve? To cleanse? To refresh those who are weary and burdened?

I urge you: **Do not let this water go to waste.** Do not let your love remain unused. Just as Jesus knelt to wash the feet of even Judas, who would betray Him, may we also extend love to all.

As we continue this Lenten journey, let us reflect deeply on the **meaning of life, of love, of service, and of holiness**. Let us ensure that the direction of our spiritual journey is right, that we are walking toward our Lord with cleansed hearts and willing hands.

May the living water of Christ sustain you, purify you, and overflow from you in love and service.
