

Maundy Thursday Reflection

The Rev Dr Brian Fraser

**Ecumenical Service at Brentwood Presbyterian
March 28, 2013**

John 13:1-15

“Do you know what I have done to you?”

Have you ever noticed this about your relationship with Jesus –
the better you get to know him,
the more uncomfortable he makes you feel?

Isn't that really the case?

It certainly was with the disciples and those who encountered
Jesus in the flesh.

John's account of the last supper and the footwashing
that we read this evening
is only one of many examples
throughout the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life and impact.

The learned of his day must have been uncomfortable
with his challenges to the scribes and Pharisees,
especially since he always seemed to win.

The devout of his day were certainly uncomfortable
with his flaunting and reinterpretation of key laws,
like Sabbath restrictions.

The merchants who profited from the temple system of sacrifice
were outraged at his disruption of their businesses
when he went berserk at the Temple.

The Romans were threatened by his messianic claims,
even if no one really could grasp how uncomfortable those claims
really were until beyond the end.

The religious authorities of his people
were so uncomfortable that they plotted successfully
for his execution,
readily abetted by the political authorities.

So, that line near the end of John's account of the footwashing
is loaded with a lot of meaning.

"Do you know what I have done to you?"

"I've turned your worlds upside down,"
is the clear implication of this question.

"I've set an example for you to follow,"
is the direct statement.

"I know better than you do how uncomfortable this makes you feel.

Trust me on this.

I've provoked you to love and do good deeds.

It's simple, really.

Love God, love others, and love yourself.

That's all the law and the prophets on a bumper sticker.

Go and do it, just like I have for you.

And here is my only promise.

Wherever you go and do what I've done to you, I will be with you."

When I first came to Vancouver way back in 1985

to teach at Vancouver School of Theology and

administer St. Andrew's Hall,

I was invited to work with West Point Grey Presbyterian Church

as they searched for a new minister.

At the first meeting of the governing board of the congregation

I asked the elders what they wanted in a new minister.

The senior elder in the congregation – 88 years old on two canes –

was the last one to speak.

"I want someone to get up in that pulpit every Sunday
and challenge me to change according to the Gospel."

George knew how uncomfortable that could be.

He also knew how necessary it was, week after week,
to be reminded of what Jesus did to us and how he did it.

So, we're all in the same boat tonight,

or should I say the same sanctuary,

way beyond our comfort zones,

confronted yet again by Jesus with that question,

"Do you know what I have done to you?"

Only in pondering the depths of that question
will our souls be nourished to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ.