

The Very Reverend Timothy E. Kimbrough
Christ Church Cathedral
April 21, 2011
Maundy Thursday (7:00 p.m.)
Propers for the same

This evening we continue our pilgrimage into the very heart of the Christian mystery! The next three days comprise what traditionally has come to be known as the *Triduum Sacrum*—The Sacred Three Days. All of Lent has been preparing us, and more specifically preparing those presenting children for baptism, our teenagers who will make adult professions of faith in Jesus Christ, and those adults who are coming into the life of Christ Church from other traditions—all of Lent has been preparing them and us for this moment. Indeed, this is the time for which the whole of creation has found itself in travail—anxiously longing for its fulfillment in the mystery of Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection.¹ In many ways it is our great homecoming that continues today—re-emersion into our salvation history, the Story of our redemption from sin, the Story of our conversion, the Story of our release from bondage to Pharaoh and our arrival in Canaanland.

The painter’s pallet carries three colors today: white, red, and black. She is somewhat unsure of how to begin. No idea has properly formed itself in her mind just yet. Still, it is precisely this state of mind that often produces her best work. She whispers, “I feel joy.” Yet the joy she feels is somehow clouded by an impending disaster. Her thickest brush mixes just a touch of black into the large pool of white paint. And with the lightest shading of gray a single thick, one might even say bold (if not for the color) stroke is made across the middle of the canvas.

It’s the same canvas, yet suddenly it was two. Her thick stroke of gray almost dared the lower half of the canvas to invade the upper half. The same but now different. “This is my Body. This is my Blood.” The gray stroke, however striking, was too faint for the disciples to grasp. They saw the single canvas yet for them it remained one-dimensional. “What did he mean ‘This is my Body. This is my Blood’ and why is washing our feet? He is *our* master we should be washing his feet.”

The artist whispers, “A great gift is being given. I feel warmth. I feel passion.” And with that she made an equally bold, bright, blood red stroke diagonally crossing the gray stroke in the center of the canvas. The dare each canvas half had had to invade the other was silenced by the red stroke. The canvas parts were still one, though distinct, and now joined by the gift of the red.

What *is* she painting? It doesn’t make any sense to me. It doesn’t even look like painting. How can she call herself an artist just throwing paint up on a canvas like that? “Those who have eyes let them see.”² “Those who have ears let them hear.”³

The pilgrimage, the journey itself is never self-evident. It would be untrue to say we know precisely where we are heading. Even the contrasts of Gethsemane did not offer Jesus clear direction. Yet Canaanland is our common hope. His Body and Blood

¹ Romans 8:22-23.

² John 9:39.

³ Mark 4:9.

are our sustenance and constant companions—our spiritual nourishment in the Way. We can receive believing, but we cannot experience the fullness of our homecoming until after the tragedy of Good Friday. The painting is still in progress.

We have been provided with sustenance but now Jesus moves beyond the motions of mere companionship and imprints us with the example of love and humility. He came not to be served but to serve. He washes my feet—even so my arms, my legs, and fingernails remain dirty. Let me wash you, Lord. I am not worthy of this.

All the while the Judas of our sub-conscious is wondering when we can get this over with. The symbols are quaint, the sentiment understandable—but all of this has little bearing on my life and the real world. There's a revolution to be won, traditions to maintain, bargains to be struck. Let's get on with it. Besides if you dawdle, if you linger too long undecided (or simply enveloped by the silence) the paint on the artist's pallet is going to dry — worse the roast might burn.

The pilgrimage, the journey into the heart of the tomb is just beginning. There are many actors, many artists, and many Judases to be met along the way. Jesus is calling for you. Do not be afraid. Take his hand and see what wondrous thing God has done for you. Let the waters of your baptism rush over you again and inspire you into the bosom of Abraham.

In many ways it is our great home-coming which begins tonight—a re-emersion into our salvation history, the Story of our redemption from sin, the Story of our conversion, the Story of our release from bondage to Pharaoh and our arrival in Canaanland. Nothing matches this time in its focus. Nothing matches this action through which God shows his desire for intimacy with his people. All roads are leading to Jerusalem and Jerusalem is every place, every time, and every heart.