

During this season of Epiphany, we are seeing that Jesus is revealed to us as the Savior of the world. Because of this, we all know Who Jesus is, and we know what He has come to do for us, and that will never change. But the question for each one of us individually now is, What are we going to do with Him? It is kind of the same question our nation has with its two political parties. Our president just gave his Inauguration address and he laid out what he would like to see happen in our country. While there are a few things that everyone seems to agree upon, there are others that even members of his own party question. So what are they going to do — are they going to follow the plan which he has laid out for them? The same type of question also arises before us with our Savior. We know what He has come to do for us, but what are we, personally, going to do with Him? What He wants us to do is what He asked of the first disciples: WE ARE TO FOLLOW JESUS. That is what the term “disciple” really means — we are following the teachings of someone. We are going to see that it is difficult for us sinful beings to follow Jesus as He wants us to, but as we witness His love and sacrifice for us, we will want to follow Him in everything.

As much as the disciples loved Jesus, they seemed to have great difficulty in really following Jesus. Jesus called them to follow Him, and they were eager to leave behind everything to follow Him. But that did not last their entire life. Judas was willing to betray Jesus for silver coins. They all argued among themselves about who was the greatest among the disciples. When Jesus was arrested, all of the disciples forsook Jesus and fled for their lives. Then Peter, not listening to Jesus’ warning, tried to follow Jesus, but ended up denying that he even knew Who Jesus was.

Once, in order to illustrate what it meant to be a follower of Jesus, Jesus Himself took off His outer coat, wrapped a towel around His waist, and took upon Himself the job of a servant by washing the feet of the disciples. That was not a job which any of the disciples wanted to do themselves. After all, that was the job of a servant. Jesus did this for them so that He could illustrate how far true love would go instead of arguing about who was the greatest. After He was all done, Jesus asked them, *“Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”* In other words, Jesus told them to imitate His love by letting go of their pride and ego and selflessly give themselves to others.

You and I often have the same problem as the disciples did. Even though Jesus has called us to be His followers, even though we profess that we are His followers, at times we do not act the way that Jesus wants us to act. At times we act as though we are too good, or too important, or too self-centered to handle the lowly tasks of helping others in their need. Jesus reminds our old, sinful natures, that among His followers, those who are the greatest are those who lovingly serve the needs of others.

After all, that is exactly what Jesus has done for each one of us. Certainly, He washed the feet of His disciples, but He did something much more important. He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. When we look at the cross, we can see the ultimate expression of His selfless love. Jesus did not deserve to die that horrible death, having been abandoned by God. That was the punishment which you and I deserved because of our wretched sinfulness. Because of my selfishness, because of my sinful thoughts, because of my sinful actions, because of all of the times that I have not loved others in the way that Jesus has shown me, Jesus should have simply told me to go to hell. But His love for me, as well as for you, would not allow Him to do that. Isaiah tells us, *“He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”* (53:5)

The almighty Son of God humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross, so that you and I would belong to Him forever, experiencing peace and joy and knowing we are God’s blood-bought children, knowing that we shall live forever in His presence, knowing that we are loved by Him.

As we come to know His love for us, as we come to know what He was willing to do for us, certainly we will want to follow Him. Jesus message was: "Repent and believe the good news!" (v15) We will follow Him by receiving the forgiveness of sins for all of those times when we have let our old, selfish natures take control as we gave in to sin. We will follow Him as we receive eternal life with Him.

Then, as we follow Him, receiving His many blessings, we will also want to follow Him by imitating His love for all people. Not only did Jesus wash the disciples' feet that Maundy Thursday evening, He also instructed them on how they were to show their love for one another. Jesus told them, "*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*" (Jn 15:12-13) When Jesus called us to to follow Him, He had in mind that our love for Him would grow as we received His manifold blessings, and then we would begin to imitate His love for all others. Jesus loved Judas, who would betray Him, Jesus loved Pilate who would sentence Him to death, Jesus loved the soldiers who would carry out the crucifixion. Jesus has shown us His great love as He has appeared as our Savior as well.

Now, He looks at you and me, and asks, What are you going to do with me and my love? Are you going to leave church today without being affected by Jesus' love. Jesus' invitation is for each one of us. He suffered and died on the cross so that each one of us would receive the full forgiveness of all sins. He offers His love and forgiveness freely to all. What are we going to do with Jesus? I intend to follow Him, even as He has invited. As I follow Him, I will seek His love and forgiveness for all of the times that I have let my sinful nature gain control of my actions. I will follow Him, seeking to love and serve one another on this earth, even as He loved and served me by dying for my sins. That is what He desires from each of us.

We have a choice when we hear of how Jesus has revealed Himself as the Savior of the world. We can choose to follow Him, as the disciples did when Jesus called them. Or we can choose to ignore Him and hope that He goes away. But, sadly, there is another choice that is often chosen, and that is to claim to be followers of Him by word, but then not by action. It is difficult for us to continue to show our love for Him as we are His followers, but the more that we receive His love and forgiveness, the more that we will want to put our love for Him into practice in our lives. May we all heed His call and truly be followers of Jesus.