

## Maundy Thursday

According to news reports, tourist arrivals are almost up to pre-pandemic levels.

"We're getting back to normal," the talking heads announce on the nightly news.

Which means unsustainable growth is back on track to wreak continued havoc with our environment and indigenous culture.

And what with two mass shootings in a week, one in Atlanta targeting Asian women, the other in Colorado targeting everybody, it appears that a return to normalcy is sadly — a return to normalcy.

Yet what we define as "normal," Jesus spends a lifetime trying to upend.

Our claim on that which is "normal" — and how at odds it is with God's definition of "normal," is on profound display this evening.

Unlike the other gospel writers who take us to that upper room with Jesus and his friends, on the night of his arrest, where the focus is entirely on the bread and the wine, John's gospel takes us somewhere else.

John takes us to the essence of the meaning of the bread and the wine, without ever mentioning either.

He takes us to loving service, for the benefit of one another.

He takes us to the example Jesus sets for how we are to treat, not only our friends, but our enemies and even our in-laws, as well.

We know that's the case because not everyone in the room tonight with Jesus is a friend.

Worse than an enemy, Judas, his old friend, is about to betray him.

Worse than a scheming enemy, Judas, the supposed friend, is preparing to land the fatal blow.

And yet, Jesus washes his feet too.

We know this because John takes pains to point out that

"Jesus loved them all.

He loved them to the very end."

Jesus tries yet again, while speaking at Peter, but perhaps really speaking to Judas, as he insists that self-giving love, poured out in service to one and all, is the true source of power and joy and salvation.

That self-giving love, poured out in service to one and all, will, at the end of the day, still be standing, while all the tanks and assault rifles, all the bigotry and hatred of this world, will be piled on a dustheap.

As this pandemic comes to an end, as life returns to "normal" – can we ask ourselves whose "normal" we choose to pursue?

Shall it be ours; which brings with it climate disaster?

Fear?

Hate and violence?

Or shall we pursue the normalcy of God?

Which calls us, beckons us, entices us, to take up the arduous journey on the road of self-giving love?

Making it no small irony that this Maundy Thursday falls on April Fools Day.

Since God's normalcy is always seen as foolish by the standards of my best thinking.

Whose way will you follow?

Whose way will I?

How we respond may very well  
determine the fate of this world.

+amen