

Maundy Thursday Meditation on April 1, 2021.
Pastor Jon kneels at a basin with a pitcher and towel.

It was a Thursday night before the Passover Festival.

Jesus gathered his friends for one last meal.

Knowing that his hour had come to depart from this world, Jesus had some last minute advice he wanted to share with his disciples... almost like a graduation speech...
or advice a parent might give to a child the night before their wedding....

But instead of teaching in the traditional way, Jesus began with an object lesson.

He got up from the table, took off his robe, and tied a towel around his waist.

He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciple's feet, one at a time, starting with Peter.

Peter protested, "You will never wash my feet."

After all, Jesus was his Lord and Teacher.

Jesus wasn't afraid to do the dirty work of the household slave – typically someone of non-Jewish descent assigned to wash the guest's hands and feet before dinner.

Imagine the host of the dinner taking on the role of the household slave. It would be jarring.

Peter's response is predictable as a loyal follower of Jesus who knew He was the Messiah.

But Jesus says to Peter, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Peter said, then wash all of me. But

Jesus rejected that idea. He wasn't talking about an outward washing.

What did Jesus mean? Unless I wash you, you have no share with me. Was Jesus talking about a spiritual cleansing?

To be washed by Jesus means to be open to accepting his grace and hospitality... to have an abiding relationship with him. To let Jesus wash your feet shows vulnerability and trust.

To be unclean on the other hand means that you reject the relationship that Jesus offers, like Judas in this story. Judas betrayed Jesus that night. Judas was overcome by the devil. But still, Jesus washed Judas' feet and even set him next to Jesus at the table. We know this because Jesus and Judas dipped their bread in the same bowl.

After Jesus washed all their feet he began to teach them. "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Was Jesus being literal or metaphorical? If foot-washing is a metaphor, what does it look like today? It means any time you put others first... or take the lower position even though you may have privilege and power over someone. It means seeing the value in every human life, and standing up or speaking up on behalf of the vulnerable. It's like Christ Hymn in Philippians 2:4-7 where Paul says, "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

Finally, that same night, Jesus gave a new commandment or mandate to his disciples. It is why we call this night Maundy Thursday. Maundy means mandate or

commandment. “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

Sounds simple enough, but it is the hardest commandment to live out? How hard is it to love like Jesus... unconditionally? How quick are we to dismiss others not like us? Or cast people aside? or blame the victim? How often do we put ourselves first? All the time.

But did God give up on us? What kind of God loves us in spite of our flaws and selfishness? We wonder with the hymn writer, “What wondrous love is this... that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul?”

Amen!