

Pastor Jon's Sermon from April 14, 2022

“Maundy Thursday”

Text: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Maundy Thursday is the one day in the church year that we think about feet. Normally in the liturgy we do some form of footwashing ... which I decided not to do tonight for simplicity sake. We do this to commemorate the act of Jesus kneeling at his disciple's feet at the last supper, washing their feet, and teaching them about his unconditional love for the world.

When I think of feet, I think of the family we helped in Guatemala. They had tan, leathery feet, and not much in the way of shoes. Their feet had a constant protective layer of dust sunscreen on them. The little girls, Florentina and Naomi, especially, were used to going barefoot. We even brought shoes to them, crocs-like, and when they tried them on, they looked like baby horses trying to walk for the first time.

How are your feet? Are they tired or worn out? Are they calloused or smooth? Are they clean or dirty? Do you have corns or bunions? Are your nails trimmed neatly, or are they discolored, uneven, or ragged? Do people tell you that your feet smell? Are your nails painted?

Footwashing in Jesus' time was the job of the household slave when the guests arrived. And yet Jesus took on this role in the middle of the meal and wanted to do this for his disciples before he said goodbye to them. Along with washing their feet, Jesus taught them a new commandment, to love one another as he loved them, and what ministry should look like when he is gone from their sight. Ministry for Jesus was about serving others and having a relationship with them... one person at a time. If you wash someone's feet, or someone washes your feet, you are instantly in a relationship with them. It is an intimate setting. You become vulnerable and allow the washer to see a part of you that is normally covered up by shoes and socks.

Can you relate to Peter protesting when Jesus, his Lord would stoop down and do such a thing? “You will never wash my feet”. Not just my feet, Lord, but wash all of me. We too have a hard time accepting

God's grace and love for us. We feel we have to be perfect for God to love us or be able to earn God's love in some way. But here, Jesus shows us what God's love is all about by silently wash their feet.

While in Guatemala, I had the honor of having my hiking shoes brushed and polished by two of Rich Garmen's friends in the public square. Rich was trying to give them some business, but for me it was a real honor. I truly thought of Jesus washing the disciple's feet as my feet were being tended to. I felt the Holy Spirit. I was proud of my newly cleaned shoes and didn't want to get them dirty the rest of the week. It was a very intimate feeling to have someone touching my shoes as I helplessly stood their letting them serve me.

What kind of God do we have...who is Lord of all, and yet chooses to become servant of all? Jesus' act of footwashing challenges the widely held perceptions concerning power and authority in our world. Jesus was the Messiah, the savior of the world, and yet he stooped down to the lowest position in the household to serve others. You don't see that often. Leadership to Jesus was about serving others... and not being afraid to get your hands dirty.

Notice, the disciples have no say in if their feet are washed or not. Jesus chooses to give in this way. All they can do is wait patiently for their turn. Imagine how long this took. Jesus, knowing that Judas would soon betray him, washes his feet too. Again, a sign of God's grace for all.

The gift of salvation and the forgiveness of our sins is Jesus' action upon us. Jesus' work on the cross is this same servant type love Jesus demonstrated in the footwashing.

We receive this undeserved love and grace tonight in our confession and forgiveness and in Holy Communion. I can proclaim that your sins... the parts of your life you are embarrassed to show others... are forgiven and you are washed clean. Then like the disciples that night, you are called to follow Jesus command to love one another and wash one another's feet.

What does washing others feet look like today in our world? It means serving others, no matter what your status is in life. Who's feet are being called to tend to this week?