

Pastor Jon's Maundy Thursday Sermon on 4/17/2025 based on John 13:1-17, 31b-35

"Feet"

On a Thursday night, Jesus gathered his friends together for a meal, much like we are doing tonight and gave them a new commandment.

It is at this meal that Jesus shared a farewell message to his disciples. You see, Jesus knew what was coming the next day... his betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion were on the horizon. But like a dying parent on their death bed sharing final wishes with their children, Jesus wanted to give his disciples final instructions on how to carry out his mission after he was gone.

But Jesus doesn't just use words, he shows them what he means. He teaches a powerful object lesson.

He gets up from the table, takes off his robe, ties a towel around his waist, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciple's feet and dry them with the towel. This action would have taken some time for each person. And not only that, this was the role of the household slave to do the foot washing. Jesus in Jesus' fashion takes on the lowest position in the household as a slave and serves his followers, even though he is their master and Lord.

Imagine Jesus going around the table washing each of the disciple's feet. I wonder, what order he went in? Did he wash Judas' feet, even though he knew he was going to betray him? I believe he did. What would you do if Jesus offered to wash your feet? Would you protest like Peter, not just my feet, Lord, but my hands and head. There are so many parts of us that are unclean, stained by sin, that we are not proud of. Things of our past and present that need cleansing. And yet Jesus insists to wash us.

The first time I ever had my feet washed in a religious context was at Camp Ewalu in Iowa. Me and a couple friends from seminary were asked to play music for "The Dirty Feet Retreat". This was truly my

first gig playing music out. But when they read John 13, the footwashing, and began washing people's feet, I went up and had a stranger wash my feet. It was an overwhelming feeling, one I had never experienced. I felt vulnerable... letting a stranger touch my smelly feet.

But for many of us having someone see our feet, or much less wash them, can be embarrassing. Feet are a very personal thing. We like to hide them in socks and shoes. Right now I have a black toe-nail on my big toe. You may have corns, bunyons, or blisters, or chipped nail polish.

When I think of Jesus washing feet, I think of my grandma Flory. Later in life she developed rheumatoid arthritis. This was a real struggle for her as her fingers and toes became shriveled up. She loved being active outdoors at her lake house, swimming, grilling out. But her joints, fingers, and toes wouldn't allow her to do the things she loved to do. It is in thinking of her that I imagine Jesus washing her feet, showing his gracious love and calling her and her shriveled feet precious.

Grandma Flory was a woman of faith, washed in the waters of baptism, and now rests with Jesus and all the saints who have gone before her in the faith.

At this meal, Jesus gave the disciples a new commandment. That is where we get the name for this day in the church. Maundy Thursday comes from the Latin word Mandatum or Mandate. Jesus' new mandate is to love one another. He says, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." The love Jesus has for us and the world is extravagant... even for people that we can't trust or like being around. We are still called to love. Jesus love is for all people everywhere. That is why my heart breaks when I see exclusion, hate, and judgement from one human over an above another. Jesus' love has no boundaries. It is a servant love. It is willing to let go of power for the sake serving the other.

Let us love like this so that everyone will know we are his disciples.  
Amen.