

Wash up for dinner! Maundy Thursday
John 13:1-17, 31-35 | Greg Bohlken |
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The Gospel according to St. John. ***Glory to you, O Lord.***

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already decided that Judas son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, slaves are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

...

Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been

glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The Gospel of our Lord. ***Praise to you, O Christ.***

It's time to get washed up for dinner. Let's talk about the washing and the dinner.

Feet. Gross. Dirty. Smelly Feet.

You're probably thinking what Peter says in our Scripture reading, "Oooh – don't touch my feet!" ... Feet are one of our least favorite body parts. We keep them covered.

So, I invite you tonight to uncover them: Take off your shoes & socks. Go ahead – right now. Be barefoot for the next 20 minutes while we have a sermon, a hymn, and a foot washing. If you're hesitant, you'll have more invitations soon and perhaps you will change your mind. There's no judgment here if you choose not to go barefoot but tonight's message is literally about feet, so we'll do better if we're actually looking at our feet. As you look at your bare feet, think about life in Jesus' day –

Question: How did they get around from town to town? (They walked. That's rough on the feet.)

Question: What shoes did they wear? (Sandals, likely thin and flimsy. Even more rough on the feet.)

Question: What were the walking paths like? (Rocky, dirty with animal waste, human sewage, food scraps, and dust all combined into a muddy mess. And they had to walk right through it.)

If you're still wearing shoes, you are again invited to take them off so you can see your feet and get the full picture that Scripture is painting.

Look at your feet and imagine callouses and cracked skin with sewage and mud caked in.

Question: In Jesus day, how did people gather around the dinner table?
(Reclining, my feet only inches away from your face and food.)

So you see why it was necessary to get washed up for dinner – especially the feet. And why touching all that junk to wash feet was a disgusting job assigned to slaves.

Now the dinner.

Question: What meal were they commemorating that night? The Passover meal. They were gathering to remember how, long ago in Egypt, God had saved God's people from the evil grip of being Pharaoh's slaves.

So they're having an important meal, and they've got dirty feet.

If you still have shoes on, I again invite you to take them off and have a direct visual example to ponder as we think about Jesus' actions that night. You might experience new moments of the Holy Spirit working in your heart.

So they gathered to celebrate Passover, but on that night, Jesus forever changed the Passover meal. He said, "This isn't just some bread to remind us that generations ago God was faithful in saving God's people. This bread is my body broken for you to save you from being slaves to the sin that breaks our relationships." Passover forever changed that night and became Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, God's act of love to free us from the bondage of slavery to sin.

As part of Jesus' final teachings to his friends before he entrusts them to continue his Kingdom work on Earth, Jesus emphasized their relationships. The dirt on their feet – the stuff we like

to keep covered – was a surface-level reminder that Jesus cares about our dirtiest, most intimate, vulnerable, ugly stuff in our hearts – the stuff we don't want to let him see. Look at your feet – do the warts and scars and dirt remind you of roads you've walked that seem too painful or shameful to let Jesus see?

And if Jesus is willing to wash our filthy feet, he's also willing to lovingly walk with us on the roads we don't want anyone else to see - the bad choices, betrayals, the selfishness, the hurt we've caused and hurt we've received. Jesus said, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand... unless I wash you, you have no share with me." We have real brokenness in our lives that blocks us from full relationship with Jesus. Jesus can heal it and wash it away. We have to let him in. Your feet are just the beginning. Jesus is really after your heart and loving you fully.

So that's Maundy Thursday. Maundy from the Latin word for Command. Of

all the things he could have taught on his last night with his friends, Jesus commanded us to love each other and showed us how through the servant act of footwashing. He gave himself for us – broken and poured out – that we might fully know his love. It's humble, lowly, dirty work. Here's the chairs, towels, basins.

Stay barefoot while we sing our next hymn, then after the hymn I'll give some instructions if you'd like to be washed and wash others. Let's stand and sing.

The Servant Song ("Won't you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you...")

I invite Father Bruce and Pastor Bob to come up and the 3 of us will wash each others' feet. After that, Pastor Bob will invite everyone to come and experience footwashing. Further, I invite you, after being washed, to take the towel and wash the feet of others. Then someone takes the towel from you and they wash, and so on. When

you decide you're done washing feet, just pass the towel back to me or Pastor Bob or Father Bruce and we'll continue on washing feet.

As you're washing, remember – hold the ankle of the foot above the basin. Never put a foot in the basin – that's the dirty water. Holding the ankle above the basin, use your other hand to pour some water, rub it on the foot, and towel dry the foot, gently placing the foot back on the ground not in the basin. When you don't want to wash any more, just pass the towel back to me or Pastor Bob or Father Bruce. This is all optional, we have choice. And so, no judgment if you don't, but a warm invitation to come wash up for dinner!