

Sermon
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John 13:1-17; 31-35

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John 13:1-17,31-35

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. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table,* took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then 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. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' ⁷Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' ⁸Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' ⁹Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' ¹⁰Jesus 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.' ¹¹For 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 returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also

ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants* are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him,* God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.³³Little 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. ³⁴I give you a new commandment,' that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another..."

Sermon

Fear Not! Why Are We Afraid?

Grace and peace from the life giving one, the creating one, the liberating one, the merciful one, Father, +Son and Holy Spirit who commands that we should love one another.

Membership has its privileges as credit card commercials remind us, that membership may encompass living in a certain zip code, 100 thousand he mile frequent flyer miles, an executive level job, driving a red sports car and carrying a certain credit card.

If you have these things, you will have certain advantages; you may not have to stand in line, or you can go to the front of the line. You may get certain discounts and special notices. A preferred table or your thoughts may be given greater consideration. You will not be expected to perform certain tasks.

If you carry a certain card, a black card, a platinum or gold card, and you should "never leave home without it," your membership will carry the day. If you are a mother, people will bend over backwards to accommodate you, nobody wants to offend somebody's mother.

Remember the camp song: “be kind to your web-footed friends, for a duck may be somebody’s mother”? Rank and membership has its privileges.

In today's Gospel story, Jesus did not hesitate to perform the lowly task of washing his disciples' feet. Here is the teacher washing his pupils' feet; here is the creator of the universe kneeling at the feet of mere mortals and washing their dirty feet. There is no indication in the scripture that Jesus used gloves.

What Jesus did when he washed the feet of his disciple's feet was to completely turn the foot-washing custom on its head. This was a powerful act, which continues even today. And here is Jesus again: the enslaved listening to the stories about him, how he broke the rules and invited the poor to the banquet. He invited sisters like Mary and Martha to be part of discussion usually reserved for men; how he talked to a woman at the well, told judgmental law and order types to put their stones away, that he got the multitude to generously share their little bit of bread and fish with each other; told stories in which a Samaritan was seen as good and a hero; he healed a lame man on the Sabbath.

Jesus was always inverting customs and breaking the rules and surprising people by doing the unexpected. In our times, foot washing is still performed: as a ritual in our worship services, typically in Lutheran congregations on Maundy Thursday, and just as often in everyday encounters but by other names.

By washing the disciples' feet Jesus was pointing his them towards a new order. A new way of being; a new way of loving God, with all our hearts, our souls and minds; and to love neighbors as our selves.

Willie was one of eight children in his family who lived in rural Alabama. His father worked at the local mill, but earned very little. Willie's family was very poor. Growing up, Willie had no shoes. In winter, spring and summer, he loved going barefoot, but winter, winter was a different story, for not only did his feet get cold, but his bare feet caused his whole body to be cold.

One winter morning, while Willie was carrying dinner to his father, about 2 miles away, Willie's feet became cold, and ached with pain. The ground was hard and cracked, broken with ice. Down near the cross roads, Willie passed a little country store. This store was owned by lady named Miss Williams.

When Miss Williams saw Willie she called him over. “Where are your shoes?” she asked. ‘I don't have any.’ He replied. Come into the store she demanded. So he went in and sat on a little bench. Miss Williams brought over one of those metal

things and measured his foot. She found a box on the shelves, and placed it on a table near him.

In a few minutes she returned with a basin of warm water, soap and a towel. She sat on the floor in front of him and washed his feet.

The warm water at first hurt Willie's feet, as the water got into the cracks in his feet.

She washed and dried his feet good. His feet felt good when she rubbed them with Vaseline. After putting socks on his feet, and then a new pair of shoes, Willie became so excited that he jumped up and ran all the way home.

Where did you get the shoes his mother asked. Miss Williams gave them to me, he said. "Did you say thank you? No, I forgot, he said. Then you go right back and say thank you for the first pair of shoes you have ever had.

Now that Willie is a grown man, he still stops by Miss Williams' once a week, to say thank you. You see Miss Williams is in a nursing home with severe dementia, and remembers almost no one.

Like Jesus, Miss Williams did not wash all of Willie; Jesus did not wash all of Peter. Both recognized their needs: caring for their feet.

Jesus washed the disciples' feet because he was preparing them to be sent into the world, a world which was dangerous, unfriendly and unwilling for the most part to receive change. They had the tools, lessons and knowledge but Jesus knew that they needed to be ready to walk into the world. He knew that they needed to appreciate the necessity to love each other and their neighbors and to show that love. They also needed to be humble in their proclamations.

Today, are you ready to walk back into the world?

When Jesus had finished washing his disciples' feet, he explained to them that he has set an example of humble service, not domination, which he means for us to imitate "Serve one another, as I have served you; love one another as I have loved you.

Washing another's feet can also be another way of attending to their needs; those in the congregation, those in the neighborhood, or the stranger or alien. The spirit of foot washing can take several forms.

It can mean being a caregiver, to the sick, or aging

Listening to a person, hearing their story

Delivering a basket of food, or volunteering for a feeding program

Advocating for the homeless, to name a few. All of these are the foot washing that we are able to do. All of these may be the shoes that some barefoot kid needs in the cold or winter weather.

The Prophets Micah and Isaiah have told us to pour out ourselves for the hungry and afflicted. s what God wants and requires: the answer is never the ram or our ritual. They tell us to stop pointing fingers and speaking evil. According to Amos, God absolutely loathes our feasts and burnt offerings in the absence of Justice. God is not impressed by these sorts of things.

God wants justice to roll down like water and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. According to Micah, the most straight forward of the prophets, we are to work for justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God

Jesus' washing of the feet is a lesson in humbling ourselves to service, not domination; to rid ourselves of the urge to enslave, to exploit.

**During Jesus' time and today, people lived in fear.
So why are people afraid?**

In our times and in three short months, a global pandemic has changed our lives: The deadly virus has spread to almost every country, infecting over a million people, and killing over 60,000 all over the world.

Here in this country about 300,000 have been infected with deaths approaching 8500. The pandemic separates us from our churches and public places, separated people from their work places and their friends, separates us from family. It fills hospitals, and empties schools, crashes economies and broken healthcare systems. It has created joblessness.

The virus knows now boundaries and infects people regardless of zip codes, education, income, race or ethnicity, or position. This enemy is invisible and travels in ways not completely understood. And it can be lethal.

The pandemic is driven by the Covid-19, it brings with it isolation, loneliness, despair. To survive we may need to do as Jesus taught, open up our imaginations

to the world for solace and companionship, to be open for healing, and for repentance (changing of our mindset).

This repentance is a renewal of imagination, and a realization of God's creation which is already very good. A changed way of thinking, of seeing the world.

People are afraid. Many people are asking "Where is God in all this?"

God is present in the first responders: the doctors, nurses, technicians, the scientists, the national guards.

God is in the caregivers,

God is in the people who provide essential services, while the rest of us are securing in place;

In similar circumstances-

The gospel of Mark tells the story of Jesus calming the storm: while they were in the boat, a furious storm came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was asleep. The disciples woke him and said to him "Teacher don't you care if we drown?"

He woke up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet!" Then the wind died down and everything was completely calm. Then He said to the disciples, why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

The pandemic reminds us daily that all of us, all humanity are on the same boat. All of us are fragile and disoriented, and the pandemic has caught us by surprise, but God is in this mix, and each of us has a part to play.

Comfort each other

To keep each other safe, and to protect each other; all our false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our world and schedules, projects, our habits and priorities.

It is time to live differently: live better, love more and care for other, and even though we may be fearful, we can repent. God is calling people to faith, which is not just believing God exists, but turning to him and trusting.

The Holy Spirit is using the pandemic to redeem, value and demonstrate how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people. Those who are not in

the newspapers or on cable TV are the ones serving others and making life possible. These unnamed people understand that no one reached salvation by themselves.

Luther believed that all vocations could and should contribute to the well being of the community

(1 Corinthians 12)

If its not about love, its not about God

If its not about love, its not about Jesus

If its not about love, its not about Christianity

Before we can serve others, we have to remove our outer garment

We have to humble ourselves to reach the feet of the other, like Jesus

We have to kneel in order to reach the feet of another, like Jesus

Whose feet are you willing to wash, whose feet need washing?

Who are you willing to walk with?

Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives, where he can conquer them.

Our soul is anchored in the Lord

By his cross we have been saved

By his cross we have been redeemed

By his cross we have hope, so that nothing can separate from the love of God.

Fear not, Jesus is walking with us.

