

Sermon Preached on April 14, 2022 – Maundy Thursday

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I Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

I love a good pedicure – kind of like I love going to the dentist – I don't always love every minute of the activity – pedicures can tickle and the dentist can really get in there – but when it's done, I feel fresh.

Tasha on the other hand...not her thing. She tolerated both a manicure and pedicure for our wedding weekend and she's lucky her pedicurist didn't accidentally get kicked in the face her feet are so ticklish.

So many of us have things about our feet that we don't always want to be seen – a toe that curves this way, another one that curves that way; a weird toenail; a bunion, a mole, hammer toe.

My aunt's second toes on each of her feet were permanently crossed over onto her big toes – she taught kindergarten and when she wore sandals she had a student who sat patiently during story time that would "fix" her toes for her and then wait patiently as the toe crossed over as it tended to do and then he would "fix" it again.

Our feet aren't our most private parts, but there is something quite intimate about exposing our feet intentionally to someone else – a part of our body that is usually covered at least for 8 months out of the year, a body part that is about function, a body part usually covered by something else to make it beautiful.

It's no wonder that whenever I've mentioned that tonight's service would include foot washing I saw so many cringes – some quite obvious, some of you think I wouldn't notice but it's subtly there.

There's both intrigue about tonight's foot washing and there's definitely a little disgust (or perhaps that's too strong a word).

Tonight is the night we remember a few really important things about our relationship with Jesus:

It is the night that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, The Eucharist – Jesus sat down to a meal with his friends and took bread and said "this bread is my body, broken for you, whenever you eat it remember me" and took the cup of wine and said "this wine is the promise of the new Covenant in my blood, whenever you drink it, remember me".

It is because of this command that we, as Christians, have included this "meal" as part of our worship for centuries.

Tonight is also the night when, at that meal, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples – as Mary had washed his feet some days earlier – and told his disciples "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," and before the end of the night, Jesus said: "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."

We have not incorporated foot washing into every one of our Sunday services, although it does sound like it's quite important to Jesus, but we do it tonight as we remind ourselves of the great commandment of God to love one another – what greater love than the intimacy of washing your neighbor's feet and allowing your neighbor to wash your feet.

As I thought about Jesus washing his disciples' feet this week, I was overwhelmed by how long that would have taken – there were 12 disciples, 24 feet covered in dust and mud that Jesus didn't just rinse, he washed.

He took each of his friends' feet into his hands, poured water on them to get the initial dust off, then, it's likely he took a brush or cloth of some kind and gently scrubbed to get the caked-on bits off, taking care to be gentle around any cuts or blisters – walking in sandals, it's likely each of them had a few.

Even if each foot took about a minute to wash, that's 24 minutes in which Jesus saw every curved toe, every mole, every bunion, every toenail, every blister.

Pope Francis has a tradition of kissing each foot after he has washed it – I don't know that Jesus did that, but I think it captures the great great love Jesus described as his motivation for washing his disciples feet.

Jesus saw all of their blemishes, all of their insecurities – he touched them, he washed them, he blessed them, he loved them.

I can't help but make a connection to our discomfort with our feet with our discomfort with our selves – thinking that there are parts of us that shouldn't be seen, shouldn't be touched, parts of us that shouldn't be loved.

We cannot imagine revealing those parts of ourselves to Jesus, never mind our neighbor – we hide our feet.

The vulnerability that would require, the risk of feeling totally exposed – it's more than we can handle.

But, Jesus held every foot and loved it, Jesus holds every foot and loves it.

There is no part of you that is unworthy of love – there is no part of you that Jesus doesn't love.

I'm going to repeat that because I think it is so important to remember:

There is no part of you that is unworthy of love – there is no part of you that Jesus doesn't love.

And oh my friends, Jesus' love doesn't stop there – there is no part of our neighbors that is unworthy of love – there is no part of our neighbors that Jesus doesn't love.

If we have a hard time believing it for ourselves, I think we struggle to believe it about our neighbors, too.

And yet, Jesus washed Judas' feet even though he knew that Judas had betrayed him.

Jesus commanded that his disciples “should do as [he had] done to [them]” knowing that Peter would betray him and that the disciples would struggle with each other over power and authority once he had died.

Jesus commanded that “Just as [he has] loved [us, we] also should love one another,”

D. A. Carson, in his commentary on John's gospel, writes: “[This] new command is simple enough for a toddler to memorize and appreciate, and it is profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it and put it into practice.”¹

I think a big part of our struggle is that we cannot believe that all of the parts of us are worthy of love so how can all of the parts of other people be worthy of that love, either?

Jesus held *every* foot, washed *every* foot, loved *every* foot.

Perhaps tonight can be thought of as our practice: the practice of washing our neighbor's feet or hands as is our option tonight and recognizing that they are 100% worthy of love; and, the practice of allowing our neighbors to wash our feet and hands, recognizing that we are 100% worthy of love.

Practicing the vulnerability, practicing the courage – praying all the while that we might fully take in this love so that we might fully offer it in return.

To God be the glory.

Amen.

¹ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester, England: APOLLOS, 1991), 484.