



**“UNLESS I WASH YOU, YOU  
HAVE NO PART WITH ME.”**

JOHN 13:8

**Sermon Maundy Thursday 4 18 19**

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**“Do you know what I have done to you?” Do we know what Jesus has done to us?**

**in our collect for this Maundy Thursday service we talk of a holy mystery, as if the actions we do this night, like our Eucharist and our washing of feet, are holy mysteries. A mystery is something that cannot be explained by reason alone. Sometimes, to really *know* something, to be sure of it, we have to go with our gut. And frequently a mystery cannot be explained with language, but with gesture, with action. So we wash each others’ feet as Jesus washed his disciples’ feet.**

**Why did Jesus do this? Why did he, their teacher, their leader, their rabbi, suddenly take on the role of a lowly slave, the lowliest**

**position in a household? While arranging for the Passover seder, the last thing the disciples, this rag-tag group, would have done would have been to hire a slave or a servant to wash feet! The social position of foot-washer wouldn't be much higher than the social position of fisherman. And besides, they couldn't afford it! Almost all of the disciples were men who were not used to dinner at the equivalent of a fine restaurant. They would have washed their own feet if their feet were to be cleansed at all.**

**Take a look at the picture on the front of your program. Those are the feet of a hard worker. Those are no-nonsense feet. It's hard to imagine those feet being scrubbed. It's hard to imagine the dirt on those feet ever coming off! And these were typical feet!**

**So why did Jesus do this? He was coming to the end of his earthly journey. What were the final lessons he wanted to, needed to leave with his disciples?**

**First, he rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, a lowly animal. He was praised as a king, but he rode on a donkey to show them that he was a different kind of king, not the sort of king they were expecting at all.**

**Then he asked them to arrange for this Passover meal, a remembrance of the Jews' deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Then he gave them the Eucharist. He taught it to them. He wanted them to see him in every bite of bread, every sip of wine. He wanted every**

meal they had, from that day on, no matter how lowly or fancy it was, to remind them of life with him.

Now the meal probably wasn't unusual, but *then* he began to wash their feet! *After* the meal! What!? Why? There is something jarring and amazing about that gesture. Suddenly their rabbi stripped to the waist and behaved like the lowest servant, someone they would be inclined to ignore. But they couldn't ignore him! No!

Now, I'm sure the Jews of Jesus' day were not as uptight as we are about touching, at least not men touching men. But this foot washing business...! This went a lot further. This was about the intimate care of, the touching of feet! Eek!

Think of the intimacy of Jesus' act. A massage is one of the most sensual, intimate, relaxing things you can do for another person. A foot massage is even more so!

Why would he do that?

Because words can only go so far. The time had come for him to use the simplest gesture, a loving touch, to reach them at a new, deeper level, a level where only a loving touch would work.

Touch is profound. Touch is dangerous. But if touch can be done with trust, that's goes beyond touch. The mind and the heart can be touched.

**Think of the times when you have been touched with trust — when you have touched with trust. There are no words that can describe that experience. No words...**

**And that is why Jesus washed his disciples' feet. That is why he encouraged their participation, “unless I wash you, you have no part of me.” He taught them on the deepest level, beyond words, about trust and his love for them, a love he insisted they accept, a love that was teaching them to share with the world, to be gifts for the world. And we know, from the way they lived, taught and died that they never forgot. And that is why we remember it. That is why we repeat it. To remember we are gifts to each other from God. “Do you know what I have done to you?” Jesus can ask each of us this question.**

**And even before we give our answer, Jesus says to us, “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.” How do we show that love?**

**Do we know what Jesus has done to us?**