

This is Maundy Thursday, named after the Latin word for mandate or command. Jesus gave two commands to his disciples that night, to love one another and to celebrate the Lord's Supper in His remembrance. But before doing that, Jesus washed his disciple's feet. This was a job that a servant would usually do. But not that night. That night Jesus was the servant.

Did you ever think about what might have been on the disciples' feet? Think about it in terms of what is probably on your shoes right now. Ten people were given a brand new pair of shoes to use for two weeks before having them tested for bacteria. After two weeks, more than 420,000 units of bacteria were found on the outside of the test shoes. That's an average 42,000 units of bacteria per pair of shoes. That's disgusting! If our shoes are that bad, you don't even want to think of what those feet were like that night, sandal covered feet that had walked the dirty, dusty roads from Galilee to Jerusalem. No wonder someone needed to wash the disciples' feet. Can you imagine what the Discovery Channel's Mike Rowe could do with this in his program called *Dirty Jobs*?

One of the great ironies of the night is that the Gospel of Luke (22:24) tells us that the disciples that night had got caught up in one of their favorite arguments by asking, "Which of us is the greatest?" Then Jesus grabbed the towel and wash basin and began to wash their feet. Their chest thumping was interrupted by foot washing. How embarrassing that must have been for the disciples? Jesus showed them in a very real way that greatest is found in service, not in position or power.

Jesus' command to the disciples that night was not to wash each other's feet, although that can be a very humbling service to do for someone. Jesus' set the example for the disciples to follow, the example of love in action. Then Jesus told the disciples, **"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."** (John 13:34-35) Jesus made it very simple and clear. Love in action for the good of others is the mark of the Christian faith and life. Jesus gives us the new life of faith. That new life should show in the way that we live, in the things that we do for others without ever expecting to get anything in return. That type of love recognizes the need, then meets it.

Jesus set an example for us to follow. In the new life of faith, we are called to imitate Christ. Think of what Jesus did. Jesus knew that "his hour," the time for his death was very near. Jesus, who had come from God would soon return to God. When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, it was a symbolic act, not only an act of service to the disciples. Think about what happened.

- Jesus got up from the Passover meal. In the Jewish faith, heaven is often pictured as a banquet table. Jesus got up and left the table.

- Then Jesus took off his outer robe. He humbled himself, removed the banquet clothing. He left heaven and the glory of heaven to serve.
- He tied a towel around his waist, dressed himself like a servant. Jesus washed the disciples' feet, removing the filth of the world.
- Then he put his robe back on and returned to the banquet table.

What an amazing account of God's love for us in Jesus Christ who left heaven for earth, stripped himself of his glory, took on human flesh, entered into our pain and suffering to buy us back for God, to restore us to the banquet feast of eternity. Just as Jesus humbled himself to rescue us, we need to be willing to humble ourselves to help and serve others.

But Peter didn't get it. Listen to what happened when Jesus came to Peter. (John 13:6-10)

**He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean.**

There is a lesson for us in this. Although we have been forgiven by Christ and given a new life in His name, we still live in a sinful world, a secular world where people want the freedom to live without God in their lives. Just as our feet pick up dirt and germs by coming into contact with the world, so our lives can become contaminated by sin when we come into contact with a soiled world. We need God's love and forgiveness to wash those things away before they can infect all of us. That is why we turn to the Lord in repentance, asking for His forgiveness. We don't need to be re-baptized every time we sin, but we do need to be forgiven and made clean in Christ.

Jesus didn't just die on the cross to forgive our sins and give us new life. He set the example for us to follow and calls us to a new way of living. The new life is a life of faith and faithfulness, a life of service to others in Jesus' name. Just as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest, we too turn to God in prayer and ask for His help to live this new life. So Lord, we join with you tonight and pray, **"Not my will, but yours be done. Amen."** (Luke 22:42)