

2019 NL1 WK Maundy Thursday John 13
19-04-18

God's beloved people, grace and peace to you in the name of our crucified and risen Savior,
Jesus Christ.....Amen.....

About a year ago I was sitting in the upper gathering room of St. Mark's Lutheran Guesthouse in Jerusalem. Looking out the window I could see much of the old city including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher built in honor of Jesus crucifixion and burial. There was also Redeemer Lutheran Church where Lutheran's from around the world living in Jerusalem come to worship.

In the room was a gathering of people who had come to be friends. All of us traveling around the Holy Land together, and we were listening to Rabbi Jeremy Milgram of Rabbi's for Human Rights speaking to us about the pain that exists between peoples living in Israel.

He had just returned from a day of consoling and mourning with a Bedouin community who had had their early morning meal interrupted by Israeli government bulldozers that had levelled their elementary school without warning. This was just the latest in a long line of stories of pain and separation involving God's people, in Arabic = shaeb Allah. Allah is God's name for both Muslims and Christians in the Arab world.

I couldn't help but think about another group of people gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem. The Rabbi Jesus was there with his disciples and friends. He loved them, and he knew the end was near. But in the little time they had left, he wanted to show his disciples how much he cared and give them one last important lesson.

So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, filled a basin with water, knelt down, and began washing feet.

First were James and John. These two are the sons of thunder, fishermen whose feet might have been webbed between the toes.

Next were Andrew and Philip, friends from Galilee who were good at bringing people to meet Jesus. "*Man I love you guys,*" thought Jesus.

Thomas the twin was next, he was so sincere and trusting, "*I hope you can believe the witness of your brothers.*"

Peter was waiting.... When Jesus readied the bowl Peter stopped him, wanting to wash his master's feet, and then failing that being washed fully by Jesus. Why stop at the hands??

Jesus was ready for him, "*When you are clean, and you are, you only need your hands washed.*" Peter was always so "out there." Always ready with a question..., slow to catch on..., but so interested by manner. He will have to come a long way from "Denier" before he will truly be "the Rock" of the church.

Thaddaeus also called "Judas-not-Iscaiot" will always have that unfortunate association.

Matthew was next. Jesus found him behind the tax table and welcomed him as a brother.

Next to be washed were Bartholomew and the other James. Not a favorite way for people to remember you by, but at least James is a better name than Judas from now on.

Simon the Zealot was ready, he was so earnest and driven in his call as a disciple.

And now Judas Iscaiot..., ah Judas..., what can we do with you? You are so misguided, but already going down the path of betrayal. Still, place your feet in the basin.

And so Jesus, washed the feet of all of his disciples. Within minutes, Judas would get up from the table and set off **to betray** Jesus. And... By the end of the night, Peter would deny

even knowing Jesus – 3 times. Jesus washed the feet of those whom he loved even in the midst of betrayal and denial.

Judas had gone out, but instead of warning his disciples and wallowing in the coming events, Jesus spoke of love. “*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*”³⁵ *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*”

A new commandment, the “mandatum” from which we get the name “Maundy”.... Not only that they are to love one another..., but that the love Jesus is talking about..., the love that Jesus has modelled for them..., is a love that washes feet.

A love that takes the role of servant..... A love that washes the feet even of betrayers and deniers.

And Jesus has washed your feet. You who know what it’s like to live in your skin and walk in your ways.

You know when you have not loved your brothers and sisters in this life.

We would much rather avoid the betrayers and deniers especially when “they” is “me.” I know that I have denied and betrayed my Lord...., and yet these spiritual feet and your spiritual feet are washed in his grace.... The grace that is your salvation.

Because Jesus knows humans. Jesus knows we are messy and wonderful all at the same time, and he loves you for it. Jesus loves you enough to gather you and send you.

Today, we practiced washing/serving in a “safe” environment - - but we LIVE out there. We live out where life in all its glory is... messy, and agonizing, and heartbreaking, and wonderful.

Jesus knows that... and has set you an example of love.

Love by your service as he sends you out.

Take those clean feet of yours out for a walk in the neighborhood.

We live in the state of being “sent ones” – with the label “return to sender.”

You are a people gathered and sent in the love of Christ. People: all kinds of people; deniers, betrayers, sinners – forgiven and gathered... to celebrate, to grieve, to confess, to receive, to give.... Gathered safely and loved.

And... Sent with the purpose to love in a world of betrayal and denial. Not an esoteric kind of distant love..., but a down to earth...., get your hands wet and dirty..., service in the streets and at home...., kind of love.

The Rabbi and his people live in a world where the government in power knocks down schools in retaliation for moving toward peace.... And so do we.... Their world is our world.

We live in a world where our government separates children from their parents at the border with no plan for reuniting them.

We live in a world where cathedrals and mosques and synagogues burn.

We live in a world where disease and hunger and abusive power happen. There is enough tragedy to go around.

Yet into such a world, your Lord came.... And washed feet.... Your feet... and your Lord sends you.... for the good of the world.

Amen.....