

## Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

John 13:1-5

Do you remember just a few short weeks ago how we used to happily invite our friends and family to our home for a meal? If we were still allowed to do that now I guess we would have to say to our guests as they arrived, "Welcome. Come in. But first make sure you wash your hands for 20 seconds with the antibacterial handwash provided, and then we can enjoy our food and conversation together." Yet we can't even do that- how things have changed in just a short time.

However, I doubt if we would ever have to invite them to wash their feet first before starting the meal, and yet this was the accepted behaviour at the time of Jesus. Just to remind ourselves, people in those days wore open sandals and walked for miles along dusty roads, and their tired and dirty feet needed cleansing and refreshing before they could enjoy food and drink with their friends. In the best homes the washing would be done by a lowly servant.

In the above passage, Jesus was meeting with His disciples to have a last meal together with them, which they didn't know at the time. But He knew that His life on earth would end the following day with His crucifixion, even though afterwards He would be returning to His Father and the glory from which He came. For Him the thought of enduring the crucifixion filled Him with dread but He still had so much to teach them that evening. His teaching centred round love, His love for the disciples, for the world and us, and the disciples' love for each other. Not long before that they had argued about who was the greatest among them, but Jesus was about to show them that true greatness comes from love and humility as He washed their feet.

You can imagine the surprise and even shock of the disciples as they watched Jesus take a bowl of water and a towel and do the work of a mere servant, washing the feet of each one of them. Even included was His enemy Judas, who was about to go out and betray Him. Jesus, the One who was God before He was born as a human being, was kneeling and washing the dirty feet of people He had created, because He loved them and always would do into eternity. His action was not only an example of love but also a sign of the cleansing that He wanted to give to His disciples and ultimately to us as well. A cleansing that could only come from His sacrifice of death on the cross when He faced separation from His Father, torture and death to cleanse us from our sins.

A few days later He rose to life from the dead as a promise that we have new life through Him. Maybe it's also a sign that the illness and death from Covid – 19 will come to an end by the grace of God. At the present time it may be difficult to show the love we have seen in this passage, but we are doing it by phoning one another, helping the vulnerable by shopping for them, by keeping our distance and not going into anyone else's home so that the virus has less chance of spreading. I have a feeling that after this is over there will be many other needs, as a result, that we shall have to meet with love. We shall need to surrender ourselves to the Spirit of Jesus so that He may continue to "wash the feet" of others in love through us.

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