

Manudy Thursday – 03/28/2024

Tonight, I am going to wash at least one foot symbolizing Jesus washing his disciples' feet. Thus, it is important for us to understand at least partially why Jesus may have washed his disciples' feet. This is not a practice at all churches on this night. Many people say, "I don't want people seeing my feet".

I had never done it until I went to Ishpeming a few years ago. Tonight, I will invite anyone who wants to come up. Jesus' disciples were not too sure about Jesus washing their feet either as it was not really appropriate for a Teacher, their leader to wash their feet. It was the custom to wash one's feet when coming into a home as they normally wore sandals, and their feet were dirty. In some homes there were servants who did this.

This whole scene took place before the Passover, Jesus knew his hour had come to soon depart from this world and go back to his father. There was a lot going on in that room and only Jesus knew all of it. He knew Judas was going to hand him over to the Roman authorities. The other disciples thought they were just having a nice meal with their teacher. I wonder if they may have thought more was going on when Jesus took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself, poured water into a basin and began to wash their feet?

Most of them were quiet and maybe in shock, except Peter. It seems Peter was always filled with anxiety and had to say something. So, when Jesus came to Peter, Peter asked him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus said, "You do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand." At first Peter spoke what the other disciples may have been thinking, "Lord, you will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you will have no share or part of me." Jesus knew that Peter did not understand.

The only other time that the word wash is used in the Gospel of John is in the story of the healing of the blind man. He washed in the pool of Siloam and his sight was restored. This gave the man more of an ability to see Jesus, to recognize who Jesus was and is. Thus, this is not really about sin, doing wrong as we often define it. In John, sin is about not believing.

Remember Judas is reclining at this table and Jesus washed his feet too, even though Jesus knew that Judas would be handing him over to the Roman authorities. Jesus stated that not everyone was clean and of course he was speaking about Judas. Judas' uncleanness is about not believing. Could Jesus washing of his disciples' feet be about being better able to see who Jesus was and is?

Jesus put his outer robe back on and returned to the table. He still had more to teach them, to help them understand what he had done. Think about it, Jesus says, if I am your Lord and teacher and have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. He said, "I have set you an example."

I wonder if they had ever washed each other's feet, let alone the one who is not clean. Don't you think they were wondering which person was unclean? They had been travelling with Jesus for a few years now and one of them may have chosen not to follow Jesus, to believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

I go back to the question, "Do you know what I have done for you? In the paraphrase of the Bible, the Message we hear Jesus saying, "I am only pointing out the obvious, A servant is not ranked above the master; an employee doesn't give orders to the employer. If you understand what I am telling you, act like it—and live a blessed life."

So then, Jesus may be asking us tonight, who is your master?, who is your employer? If Jesus is our master, how are we carrying out this example that Jesus has set in the humbleness of washing their feet. It was totally out of the norm for Jesus, their leader to wash his disciple's feet including the one who would hand him over. This washing of the feet was Jesus' example of loving one another.

In a sense it is not a brand new commandment, as the ten commandments have been broken down to two, love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself. Maybe one thing that is new is that here was God in Jesus Christ carrying out this loving act of washing their feet in person. The disciples probably did not realize until later that God had washed their feet.

Of course, I am not God, but tonight we wash feet to remind us that God humbled Godself to come to earth for each person out of love. Acts of love in reality are about washing feet. This symbolic act reminds us what Jesus is asking of us, as to how to live in community, loving one another, washing each other's feet. As we love one another, we are better able to see Jesus in each other.

But it doesn't only mean the people in this beloved community, but in the world. For God so loved, that God came to earth in human form, in Jesus. God sent Jesus into the world not to condemn it, but to love it. Unfortunately, we see a great deal of condemnation and not love. If Jesus did not come into the world to condemn, then that is not we are commanded to do. We are reminded tonight by Jesus' example that we are called to love one another as we are loved.

This is a bit overwhelming as there are people we do not want to love. In the months to come we are going to be challenged more and more by Christians to condemn others and we may feel condemnation ourselves.

Tonight, we are reminded of Jesus' example of how to love. It doesn't mean being a doormat, but it does mean speaking the truth in love. He has shown us what this sacrificial, humbling love is about and he says to each us, if you try and follow my example by washing others' feet, people will know that you are my disciples, and the world will be loved.