



Foot Washing

During supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!'

Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.' After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.'

John 13:1-17

Ordinary feet they were—dusty and dirty, cracked and stained, scarred by old injuries, bearing the marks of many journeys. Imagine the look of your feet—feet that may step a little lighter these days because of new love or move more slowly because of loss; feet that run marathons or feet that barely shuffle along; feet that are weary with standing still, or that itch for new adventure. Ordinary feet they were, like yours and mine.

Silently Jesus went about his task, moving from one to another until he got to Peter who was not going to have any part of it, not because he did not love Jesus or because he would not receive what Jesus had to give, but washing feet was a servant's task. This was beneath Jesus. Peter would gladly wash Jesus' feet and he would obediently wash the feet of anyone Jesus commanded, but Jesus was not going to serve him in this way. And though he ultimately complied, it wasn't until later that Peter really understood what all this really meant. To follow Jesus is, like him, to assume the servant role, even as he came among us not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. That's hard to do sometimes, very hard to do, and yet the image of the one whom we call Lord doing just that is a reminder that such is the nature of Christian discipleship. So, in obedience and love, let us take up the towel and basin of service and give ourselves to the task of love.