

Sermon for Maundy Thursday 2026

Washing my Feet - John 13.1-17, 31b-35

"Heavenly Father, we pray that You will open the mouth of Your servant to proclaim Your Word in the power of the Spirit. Open the hearts of all who hear it, to receive Your holy gospel and write on our hearts Your command of love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Today we get a glimpse into a room. Jesus and His disciples have gathered together in an upper room of a secret location. It's the beginning of the Passover Festival and they are about to eat the Passover meal together. Jesus has arranged this. He's in charge – at the centre or the head of the table. But then, he gets down from His place and starts acting like a slave. He begins to wash their feet. Not for the first time with Jesus, His friends are astounded and confused. There's an uncomfortable silence as they struggle to process what is going on – and why.

Until Peter starts to protest. "No, you shall never wash my feet"

"You must let me wash your feet if not you are not part of me" says Jesus

"Then not just my feet, wash everything!" says Peter

I'd like to read you a poem written by Ann Lewin which vividly brings this to life.

Maundy Thursday

What, let you wash my feet?
Shouldn't it be the other way,
Me kneeling before you?
I don't think I can take such
Personal service – feet are
Funny things, shaped by experience,
Calloused and blistered;
I'm half ashamed to show
The state they're in.
And you might tickle,
I'd be helpless, at your mercy.

But you're serious, aren't you?

If I refuse, you say, I don't belong.
Take me then, Lord, and plunge me in,
Not just my feet, but everything.
Why are you laughing? Too
Extravagant? Trusting you with my
Feet would be enough?
I want to do more than test the water,
I want to jump in with both.... Oh,
I see.... Lord, I am slow.

Please, wash my feet. – **by Ann Lewin**

And after washing their feet Jesus says “you must go on and wash one another’s feet”.

How hard it can be, to let Jesus wash our feet?

How hard it can be to let anyone else care for us?

How hard can it be for us to care for others?

There are many people out there right now doing exactly that – medical professionals, social workers, carers the list goes on – so that we can get the support and care we need. There are also countless volunteers out there in the community too – foodbanks, charity work again the list goes on. And there are many people out there who need them, those who must rely on help from others. The help and care is needed and we *should* be caring for one another.

Tonight, Christians around the world will gather to remember that sacred meal—the Last Supper. Some will wash feet, as Jesus did. Others will share in communion, strip the altar, and sit in stillness, some will do all of this, remembering what Jesus gave before He was taken.

But it’s not just what He gave. It’s what He *commanded*.

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

—John 13:34–35

Notice what Jesus *didn’t* say.

He didn’t say, “They’ll know you’re mine by your denomination.”

He didn’t say, “By your theology,” or “your political convictions.”

He didn’t even say, “By how well you worship or pray.”

He said the world will know we are His by our **love for one another**.

Before He went to the cross, Jesus gave His disciples (and us) one last spiritual checklist. It wasn’t complicated. It wasn’t abstract.

- **Service** — He washed their feet, even Judas’.
- **Presence** — He shared a meal, the bread and cup of remembrance.
- **Commandment** — He told them to love.

Jesus didn’t just teach love. He **embodied** it. He knelt before the very man who would betray Him and washed his feet. He broke bread with the one who would hand Him over. That’s not just kindness. That’s radical, redemptive, sacrificial love. And that’s the love we’re called to live out.

Loving the lovable is easy. Loving those who agree with us is convenient. But Maundy Thursday love is different. Maundy Thursday love calls us to serve, to forgive, to *see* people with the eyes of Christ—even the ones who’ve hurt us.

This kind of love doesn't come naturally. It's a process. It's a lifetime of learning, of grieving, of trying, of failing, and of trusting that Jesus walks with us through every bit of it. We wait to reach that kind of love.

In this second part of our reading, Jesus too is waiting. From His triumphal entry into Jerusalem up until the Last Supper Jesus has been in charge. Now Judas has left to betray Him to the authorities. Now Jesus waits. He is no longer in control. From now on, He will no longer be 'doing', but 'done to'. And yet, at this moment, John writes these words: "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him" (John 13: 31). Now, in the waiting, is the time of Jesus' glory.

On Maundy Thursday, we can reflect not only on the beauty of Jesus' love, but on the brokenness of life. Life hurts. People betray. Dreams die. But the cross—looms just hours away and as we wait—we are reminded that God meets us in the pain. And love *doesn't* lose. In fact, it's the only thing that saves.

So tonight, gathered here in this church. Have your feet washed or receive communion or both. Sit in silence. Watch as the altar is stripped. Let the weight of this holy night sink deep into your soul.

And as you leave, carry with you this commandment—not as a burden, but as a light:
Love one another.

Not because it's easy.
Not because they deserve it.
But because He loved us first.

And through that love, the world will know that we are His.

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