



# *Maundy Thursday Evening Eucharist*

## *Sermon by Revd Allie Joseph*



### *A new commandment.*

This evening we celebrate the episode in the life of Jesus and the disciples that Jesus used to set the tone for the kind of life the church should lead after he ascends into heaven. Yesterday, Wednesday of Holy week Mary anoints Jesus' feet with costly perfume.

During the Passover meal Jesus does the most unusual thing that could be done by a Jewish teacher, one by one, Jesus kneels on the floor in front of each disciple. One by one, the master washes the feet of his disciples and changes their lives as individuals and the group that is to take this same message of love into the world. Jesus does not make any exceptions; everyone's feet is washed. No one is left out, some of us thinks, even Judas. Thomas the doubter, even Peter who would deny him. The ones who say nothing. All are washed. All are loved.

This evening is the beginning of what is called the Easter Triduum, this evening we get to have our feet washed by the master, our sins forgiven, and our dignity restored. Tonight, Jesus knows who we are and he kneels in front of us with the water and the towel around his waist with which he will wipe our feet, the dirty feet of men who wore sandals and walked in the dusty streets of Jerusalem all day.

Tonight, we are invited to lay aside our garments like the master and choose to wash each other's feet, not only speaking forgiveness but acting reconciliation and love. We can be vulnerable with each other and be open with one another, acknowledging our weaknesses and finding strength and new life in the loving act of Christ's washing his disciple's feet. Yes, some of us are not worthy of this, others think that they are and believe it so badly that they might miss this opportunity of having their feet washed by the master.

Like Peter we sometimes think that we too do not need Jesus to wash our feet. We too have been convinced that we need not the forgiveness and restoration of God. We too need to be brought into the closeness that there was between Jesus and his disciples at this specific moment in time. The washing of his disciple's feet is an embodiment of his challenge to all of us to take on the New Commandment, to love each other as He loved us. Not only with words, not with conditions or judgments. But with concrete actions. Jesus' s love for us is real, he shows us how He loves us in what he does for us.

For most of us our Christian life and witness is easy, we are free to choose and to partake to the degree and level that we are able or comfortable with. We choose to come to church or not, to participate in the life of the church or not, to be kind and generous or not. We come to Church and we celebrate communal worship, and we go back to our lives, Church in this way is a place we go to or a group that we associate with.

Jesus tells us that this place should be a place of love and reconciliation. It should be a place where servant leadership is not only preached but concretely exercised. Washing someone's feet is one of the kindest things you can do, especially after a long and challenging day. Tonight, is also the feast of the institution of the eucharist and the priesthood. Here we celebrate the body and the blood of Jesus been made available to all of us in Holy communion, and the priests who act in the person of Christ when they accept the gifts of bread and wine from us and offer it to God.

Tonight, is much the same as other nights but it is also different in that in the middle of the Holy week we come together in celebration of these great institutions. Covid 19 is keeping us from physically washing each other's feet in the liturgy but this is the night that we celebrate the humility Jesus showed in this act of washing his disciple's feet. The night he was betrayed by all his friends, save one. different. The night that Jesus gave us his all.

Tonight, Jesus offers his life in bread, wine, and he shows us that he is not like other leaders, he washes his disciple's feet and knowing who they were every one of them he does it out of love and total acceptance of who they are. This is the example that Jesus sets for us, this act has no room for self-importance, there is no half measures when you kneel in front of another person to wash their feet. He is the one whom John proclaims as the one whose sandal straps he cannot loosen. Here is Jesus taking his disciples sandals off and washing their feet. School is open and the lesson is available to all of us. This is not just a liturgy, it is the form on which we are to model our lives. Jesus gives us this lesson and with it He gives us brothers and sisters who should be willing to let their feet be washed and who will be ready and willing to wash other's feet.

Our Lord and saviour chose to love. He did not choose to love those who are clean and well dressed, with their feet already washed. He did not choose to wash the feet of the righteous and holy only, but also the sinners and the frail. Those in need of love more than anything in this world.

A new commandment we have been given.