

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Thursday, April 6th, 2023, Maundy Thursday
Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 116:1, 10-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35

What is the difference between the foot washing in the gospel today and a normal foot washing other than it was Jesus doing the foot washing?

The difference is not only that it was Jesus instead of a servant or slave doing the foot washing, but it was also the when.

Instead of at the beginning of the feast, when the guests entered, Jesus got up and washed the disciples' feet during the meal. To wash someone's feet at the beginning of the meal, is a form of welcome for the meal. In a sense to say that they are a valued guest.

Jesus washing the disciples' feet during the meal feels like it has a more permanent and lasting value. And this connects to Jesus' comment at the end of the passage, *by this they will know you are my disciples if you have love for one another.*

I would think Jesus is making the connection, and wants us to see the same, that the foot washing is an act showing the love they and we like to have for one another.

But isn't it interesting what Jesus is saying. The question how will they know you are my disciples? The answer isn't what we would expect. It is not that we need to articulate what we believe, to recite any creed or doctrinal statement. Just the other day at Max's ordination, a fellow clergy was buttoning the 39 buttons on his cassock, signifying the 39 articles of Anglican faith.

It reminds me of what I've said before, loving God seems to be more about receiving the love of God and passing it on. So, opening ourselves up to receive from God and then passing it on. To focus then on passing on what we have received from God.

That may be what Peter was struggling with today. He didn't want Jesus to wash his feet. He did not feel worthy. And maybe he and us don't realise the importance and significance of receiving and by extension passing on the love we have received.

It sounds easy, and saying the words is easy, but just like the foot washing is uncomfortable for both parties, truly loving someone over a long period of time has its challenges. And it's about intention and will as well as a warm feeling. Amen