

September 16<sup>th</sup> Sermon

Philippians 2:5-11

John 13:1-17

Jesus Washes The Disciples Feet.



“He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with a towel that was tied around his waist”.

Picture – if you will – Donald Trump or Vladimir Putin kneeling and washing the feet of their office staff....not.

The humility of the King of kings is stunning.

Have you ever been required to perform a demeaning lowly task? I always think of the ladies giving pedicures all day long.

Cast your mind back to last Sundays thoughts about Mary’s washing of Jesus feet.

Lutheran College Principals often wash the feet of selected students at the commencement service as a sign of servant leadership.

Usually the students on the receiving end of that ritual come with already clean feet.

But the task of the lowliest slave was entirely practical.

Dusty, muddy, and manure strewn roads made a meal in the presence of unwashed feet a time for gagging. Given the seating arrangements meant you had someone’s feet close to your face.

Can you imagine the thoughts uppermost in the disciples' minds as they filed into the upper room that Maundy Thursday evening?

On numerous occasions the gospel story records how the disciples argued about who was the greatest.

Peter may have thought, "John's the youngest let him wash our feet.

John may have been thinking, "Peter is a fisherman he is used to foul smells. Let him wash our feet.

Imagine what went through their minds when Jesus got up without a word and began to wash their feet:

Embarrassment or self-righteous indignation that someone else hadn't done it, or maybe stunned amazement.

Let's examine the event from two different perspectives.

#### Firstly: What the Lord Knows.

Jesus knew who he was. As God in the flesh he knew everything was unfolding just as he had planned it.

Jesus didn't need to claw and grasp at power and authority; all power and authority were his. He didn't need to assert his greatness.

His greatness was evidenced in the fact that he was so at ease with who he was that he could perform this menial task.

An old proverb says it well: "The more full the ear of grain the lower it bends."

Jesus knew that his hour had come so like Mary - earlier that week – he offered an outrageously extravagant gift to deliver us from Hell, Death and the Devil.

Not the washing of feet, but the giving of his life as a sacrifice on Calvary for you and me.

Good Friday became his ultimate act of loving service.

#### Second: What The Lord Did.

The washing of the disciple's feet serves as an object lesson for our own life as people redeemed by Jesus and loving one another.

Actually, the event isn't really about personal hygiene.

John's account like some much else in his gospel is packed with symbolism.

It is about how the Lord God Almighty chose to be incarnated into a world of brokenness and pain to redeem us poor sinners who were in need of a gracious Saviour.

I am awestruck by the opening words in John 13 and verse one.

“Jesus loved his disciples during his ministry on earth and now he loved them to the end.”

Do we get that?

Can we see the beautiful message of Jesus love for you and me in this event?

We come into Jesus presence marked with the stain and stink of life’s journey fractured by sin, and he washes us.

He washes us clean in the blood he shed on Calvary. It reminds me of the old gospel song:

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?

Are you washed in the precious blood of the Lamb?

Are you washed in the blood?

In the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb?

Are your garments spotless are they white as snow?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Is it any wonder he gets all the glory? That is as it should be!

Listen to what Paul wrote in Philippian 2:5-11

*Though he was God,*

*he did not think of equality with God*

*as something to cling to.*

*7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;*

*he took the humble position of a slave*

*and was born as a human being.*

*When he appeared in human form,*

*8 he humbled himself in obedience to God*

*and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

*9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names,*

*10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

He washes us clean in the waters of baptism and we are enabled to eat at table with him at the marriage feast of the Lamb.

In the act of Jesus washing of the disciple's feet we see a living symbol of God's self-giving love.

You know, in other belief systems the god or gods are angry gods who must be placated.

At best they are ambivalent to us human beings.

The Christian God is unique. He knows we are fallen creatures who when left to our own devices will reject our creator every time.

He knows our sin but still he stoops down in love to serve and save us.

No small wonder then that the slave-trader John Newton wrote the words, "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me".

You know the rest don't you?

"I once was lost but now I'm found was blind but now I see."

On August 16, 1987, Northwest Airlines flight 225 crashed just after taking off from the Detroit airport, killing 155 people.

One survived: a 4 year old from Tempe, Arizona, named Cecelia.

Cecelia was able to relate what took place in the moments before the crash.

Cecelia survived because, even as the plane was falling, Cecelia's mother, Paula Chican, unbuckled her own seat belt, got down on her knees in front of her daughter, wrapped her arms and body around Cecelia, and then would not let her go.

Nothing could separate that child from her parent's love — neither tragedy nor disaster, neither the fall nor the flames that followed, neither height nor depth, neither life nor death.

I think that event somehow reflects for us the nature of God's love in Jesus as he first washes his disciples' feet and then dies so that they might have life.