

Sermon for Maundy Thursday

'Lord, do you wash my feet?'

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Saint Peter is astonished at the mystery, that the Lord would lower Himself and wash His feet. He believes that he is praising Christ by refusing to have his feet washed by Him, for by refusing the Lord's service, he believes he is elevating the status of the Lord. For only slaves and retainers wash the feet of guests.

The Lord does not agree. *'What I am doing now you do not understand, but you will understand afterward.'*

What is He doing now, but humiliating himself?

Indeed, He is doing just that. Washing feet was a necessity in these times. People wore sandals; as they walked about the dirt roads of their towns, their feet became dirty, and such dirt should not be drug into someone's house. So someone must wash them. It is rude to ask a guest to wash his own feet, so the task of foot washing was relegated to the lowest; to a slave, and if not a slave, to a child, and if there be no children, to a woman, even a woman that weeps.

It is relegated to the lowest.

Yet the God of all creation *lays aside his outer garment*, and washes.

Indeed He is humiliating Himself—that is the point. *For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.* In fact, the reason why He does this slavish thing to begin with, of all things, is Christmas.

For this very Son of Man, the Lord, dwelt in indescribable glory; God of all, creator of all, worshipped by the very mountains and trees.

Yet He was also the lover of all, even of all sinful mankind. So, by the Father's will, the Son humbled Himself, taking on the form of a servant, even the child of a virgin; a lowly virgin of the house of David. This He did, that in debasing Himself,

He might become like us, and in becoming like us, becoming like our weakness, our illness, our frailty, He might die like us covered in dust, even as the feet of a wanderer.

Yet in His innocent death, death at the hands of hateful men, our purification is made whole. In death, He defeats death. In descending into Hell, He slays Satan and sacks the gates of Hades. In His Resurrection, He forgives all sin, declaring man delivered from all iniquity, for He Himself is now delivered from the tortures of eternal punishment. In His Ascension, He glorifies all mankind, for He is glorified, and He has become mankind.

We, then, have been washed by our Lord; cleansed by His passion, and revived by His glorification.

For this reason we are baptized, even baptized by Christ Himself through the intermediary of a pastor. In baptism, your head is washed, but your feet are cleaned, even as it is written *'The one who has bathed does not need to be washed, except for His feet.'*

It is in humiliation that purification comes, and there is no salvation save that one be humiliated. *For the first shall be last, but the last first.*

Blessed are the feet of those who preach the Gospel. But if they shall not receive the Gospel, wipe the dust from your feet and move to the next town. Both forgiveness and judgment shall come from the words of those whose feet the Lord has washed.

This is the Mandate, the word from which 'Maundy' comes: *that we should wash one another's feet.* For *no one is greater than his master.* If our Lord has cast away all glory and pride, so must we, for we are of Him, and in Him; Him who shall bleed.

Indeed, our Lord's humiliation is not complete only in Christmas, in His becoming a simple common man; not only in Maundy Thursday, when He washes the feet of His disciples, but in torture, and in death; the death of one unworthy to speak of. The death of a criminal. Once, He descended into our life, but it is then, when He descends into our Hell that His humiliation will be complete, and our salvation accomplished.

He must be crucified, He must cleanse us, for He has become the suffering servant, and to clean is relegated to the lowest.

Watch, for His cross comes soon. Good Friday is upon us, and all the wrath of Satan with it.

For our Lord will be betrayed, and handed over to sinful men.

As it is written:

'Not all of you are clean.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Exodus 12:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32; John 13:1-17, 31-35.