

“The meal that night was not that special really. During our three years on the road we ate most meals together. I do remember that we were all feeling pretty good about ourselves because, last Sunday we had a wild ride into Jerusalem. Jesus asked us to go find a young donkey for him, which we did of course, because we always do what he asks of us. It was awesome the reception he got. What a crowd. They were so excited, they treated him like a king. I think people have finally figured out what I knew all along: that he’s the real deal. Jesus is the one who’s going to make the difference in their miserable lives. The one we’ve all been waiting for. The one my grandparents have been waiting for. But after last week with all the people shouting -- I thought to myself, you know, I did the right thing in following this guy all over creation for the past three years. I knew all along he was the one. I mean, I don’t always get his point, but I am absolutely convinced he’s the one.”

“Anyway, back to dinner. Don’t get me wrong, the food was good. Actually, the food was better than usual, because after all, its Passover-time and its Jerusalem! So we had this wonderful meal, relieved that all our hard work is finally going to pay off. (I mean, I felt like something really big was about to happen) and then right in the middle of the meal, Jesus gets up, takes off his robe and puts on a towel. He fills a basin with water, and approaches me, right in the middle of this great meal, like he’s going to wash my feet! Now I’ve been eating for ten minutes already with dirty feet, so I ‘m thinking, what’s the point of washing them now, in the middle of the meal. But sometimes, you just have to go with Jesus because, as I’ve learned, you are not going to figure him out, and I’m sure he had a point to all this. He has these little teaching moments sometimes. I pulled my feet away, and he grabbed one and I said, ‘Lord, Are you going to wash my feet?’ And he said, ‘You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’ And I thought you know, here’s Jesus on the floor in front of me, and the servants were standing over in the corner watching this,

So I said, ‘No, Lord you will never wash my feet’. And he’s still got this grip on my ankle, and he looks at me right in the eye and said “Peter, if I do not wash you, you have no part in me.” You know me, I can’t deny him anything, And I thought, you know, this is going to go on all night and he’s not going to give up until he does this, so I heard myself laughing and saying, well then, OK Lord, not my feet only but how about my hands and my head as well!”

“He gets done with my feet, and I get back to my meal, and I see that he’s going, one by one, to everyone, washing everyone’s feet. Then he puts his robe on, comes back to the table. But something had changed. Everyone got real quiet and you could tell he had something really important he wanted to say”Do you know what I have done to you?”

“It took me a while to comprehend that he wasn’t really talking about making my feet clean. I wasn’t sure I knew what he was getting at, and sometimes I have the wrong answer to his questions, so I was relieved when he answered his own question.....he said, “If I, your Lord and your teacher have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”

“I’ve been thinking about that ever since he said it. It’s like he was a whole different person. I mean, on Sunday he rides into Jerusalem like a king, and on Thursday he’s acting like a servant. Sometimes he’s just not what I expected at all. Oh, and he said that he was an example that we should follow. Hmmm. I’ll have to think about that.”

Hearing the story of the footwashing in Peter’s voice offers a different perspective, and a different feel for the lessons taught and learned at the Last Supper. Good teachers use different approaches, different methods to reach different people. After three years of teaching, and story telling, when he knows time is short, Jesus changes his teaching approach and distills his familiar lesson of love and forgiveness and intimacy with God to an act of washing feet, an offer of bread and a sip of wine.

Tonight the scriptures tell us, Jesus knows his hour has come ... the hour in which action challenges words in which relationship is teased from rhetoric.....in which love is put on trial.....

On this last night, his final evening of teaching those who need so desperately to be taught, the night of his final meal with those who are so hungry for nurture and intimacy, Jesus demonstrates how love is to look and feel and taste. He offers object lessons of self-offering demonstrated in the sharing of himself in service, the sharing of himself in the bread and wine.

These lessons are invitations to us really, to be drawn into the scene. To imagine what it would have been like to have been there. Jesus then turns these lessons into assignments; assignments to carry what we have learned about love -- into our interior life with God, into our relationships with others.

“Do as I have done to you,” Jesus says after washing their feet. “Do this,” Jesus says after sharing bread and wine. “Do this often,” Jesus says. “As I have loved you.” In juxtaposing footwashing and the eucharist, Jesus shows us that the love which he commands us to share and make visible in our lives is service linked to sustenance.....always renewable, always available. For this Love *renews* the one who obeys its command. After Jesus ends his first object lesson, that of foot washing and returns to the table ---- he checks in with the disciples to make sure the lesson has had been learned.....

“Do you know what I have done to you?” Jesus asks us tonight.

Yes Lord, you have cleansed what is soiled, nourished what is needy, and given me the best you have to offer: your very self. You have entered the bloodstream of my being, united yourself with me. You have shown me a love which makes a difference, a paradigm for ministry. An intersection of love and service.

You have given me a glimpse at a banquet at which God is both host and food; a banquet at which all are welcome, but most especially those who are not clean, and those of us who will never quite “get it.”

“Do you know what I have done to you?” Jesus asks tonight.

Yes, Lord, you have offered an image that I cannot erase from my mind ----- *Lord of all* as *servant of all*. You have prepared a meal I continually long for ---- bread and wine which becomes love in my life.

You have challenged my image of God, whatever it may be today, and replaced it with humble service and a gentle but fierce desire for relationship with me.

Yes, Lord, you have fed me the bread of angels, more than enough for the journey through the desert of my life. You have called me out of the land I have always known to a new land where all are welcome, all are fed, all are loved.

Do you know what I have done to you? Jesus asks tonight.

No, Lord, on so many levels if I'm truthful, the answer, is "*no, not really*". But I believe your command, my assignment, was "to do", not "to know". So I will come. I will listen to your words, and I will drink your wine and eat your bread. I will hold on to your promise to be there in bread and wine, in words and examples, in the embrace of faithful friends.

And I will continue my journey, newly cleansed, newly nourished, newly prepared to shape my life with your lessons of love.