

ST. FRANCIS EPISCOPAL CHURCH
MAUNDY THURSDAY 2009

Maundy Thursday, 2009
John 13:1-17, 31b-35
The Reverend Faith Bledsoe

I couldn't let him wash my feet. They were red and peeling from the years of fishing. The ever-constant dampness had left my feet with areas of infection and rotting flesh, still evident in a few places. My mother used to wrap them with an herbal salve when I came in from the boat, but nothing ever really cured them completely. They had dried over the years of walking with Jesus, but I still had 3 or 4 places on each foot that hadn't healed.

Then suddenly there he was, at my feet with the bowl and the towel. I leaned into his face and whispered, "Please Master, my feet are not fit for your hands. Please, leave them be." He looked at me for a long time, his dark eyes soft and penetrating. Then he said, "James, if you wish to follow me I must wash your feet. It is necessary for me if I am to come into my fullness and it is necessary if you are to come into your fullness. For you cannot give what you will not receive."

And as he looked into my face, my feet in his hands, I understood that my feet were a gift, a gift for his loving; for the fullness of his service. Just as all those who came to him for healing were gifts that fulfilled his presence among us, so my feet, even infected and oozing, were a gift. They were a gift for both of us – fulfilling all of his teaching of what it is to love one another. He was the servant, I was the served – there cannot be one without the other. Without the community gathered, there would not have been, nor would there be now, any washing of feet. There would be no service of one another.

I understood in that moment that holiness is given and received. It is quietly and utterly transforming and seldom looks heroic or

miraculous. It has little to do with grand, publicized gestures and everything to do with humble gifts, given and received.

I hope as you all gather on this night, that you will gift one another with your feet for washing, whether they are freshly perfumed from the bath or less than pleasing like mine. I hope that you will do so with humble joy in the giving of a gift; that you will do so because you cannot give what you will not receive; and that you will do so because without another, there is no washing of feet, no one who is servant, no one who is served, no one to give and no one to receive holiness.

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