

John 13:1-17  
God in an Apron  
WRCOB 3.13.22

From USA Today.

*In Portland, Oregon, the homeless gather under the Burnside Bridge. For more than three years, carloads of Christians from Bridgetown Ministries have shown up on Friday nights and ministered to these needy men and women.*

*In addition to providing hot meals, shaves, and haircuts, some of the volunteers wash the homeless people's feet. Tom Krattenmaker, a writer for USA Today, was stunned by the display, calling it "one of the most audacious acts of compassion and humility I have ever witnessed."*

*This group of society's outcasts had their bare feet immersed in warm water, scrubbed, dried, powdered, and placed in clean socks. One man reported with a smile, "I can't find the words to describe how good that felt."*

*Krattenmaker commented on the significance of this foot washing: "Washing someone's feet is an act best performed while kneeling. Given the washer's position, and the unpleasant appearance and odor of a homeless person's feet, it's hard to imagine an act more humbling."*

Source: Tom Krattenmaker, "A Witness to What Faith Can Be," USA Today (12-18-06)

For 324 years Brethren have practiced  
A thing they call Love Feast.

Love Feast is a service reenacting what took place  
On the evening before Jesus was crucified.

We wash feet as Jesus washed feet.

We share a meal a simple meal called the Agape meal

And we remember the Christ's sacrificial love  
In the sharing of the Bread and Cup Communion.

It has been two years since we last celebrated Love Feast.

This year we plan to hold our Love Feast service  
The Thursday of Holy Week, April 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm

They call that Thursday, Maundy Thursday.

The word maundy is the Latin word for "command".

And it refers to Jesus' commandment  
To love one another as Jesus loved us.

I hope you will consider joining us  
For this meaningful service.

We have decided to use antiseptic wipes  
Rather than water to wash feet.

Children are welcome to join us.

A nursery will be provided for the very young.

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I often say, whether it's right or wrong

    If I am incapable of controlling my own bodily functions  
    I no longer want to be around.

I think we all dislike the idea of losing control.

And losing control over one's body is particularly difficult.

That being said, I've come to realize

    That it's a prideful thing.

I force myself to reflect on another perspective.

It comes from a book I read many years ago.

*Tuesdays with Morrie*

Morrie was a man with a terminal condition

    Who spent Tuesdays

        Being interviewed by a journalist.

Morrie learned the lesson of humility

    When he could no longer control himself.

As his body and its function deteriorated

    He needed help.

He had to let go of his pride and his need for control

    And accept his limitations.

It was not an easy thing to do

At first, it was completely humiliating.

But later came to realize, the care his caretaker took  
Was an expression of love and service to him  
And not just a paycheck.

He came to accept it with grace.

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So, how does this relate to today's Scripture Lesson?

In many ways it is the same with the service of feet washing.

I dare say, most of us find it easier  
To wash someone's feet  
Than to have our own feet washed.

Why?

To be the recipient of such care makes us vulnerable  
Defenseless and uncomfortable.

It's easier to do than it is to have it done.

It is easier to be a caregiver, as hard as that is  
Than it is sometimes to be a care-receiver.

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Today's Scripture Lesson is multi-dimensional.

First and foremost  
Jesus taught that to be his disciples

One must first learn to be a servant.

Feet washing symbolizes servanthood.

In biblical times, it was the first thing a servant would do  
When a guest entered the home.

By taking an apron and a basin of water  
Jesus knelt beside the first disciple  
And did not stop until, like a lowly servant  
He had washed the feet of each one there.

As Christians, we imitate Jesus' actions  
And learn its lessons.

No one is greater than another, Jesus taught.

**Luke 22:26-27 NRSV**

**<sup>26</sup> But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.**

Stooping to wash another's feet  
Is a lesson in humble service to humankind.

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However, when the act is reversed  
When our feet are the feet being washed  
We find something else instead.

In today's lesson, we find Peter objecting  
When Jesus attempts to wash his feet.

**John 13:8a NLT “No,” Peter protested, “you will never ever wash my feet!”**

*You, the Son of God, wash my feet?  
You, my Lord and Savior stoop to my needs?*

*Uh-uh! It's not going to happen.*

But Jesus responded.

**John 13:8b Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me.”**

Now, I've never quite understood this.

Never knew quite what to do with this verse.

And so when I came to this passage  
I emphasized instead feet washing  
As a lesson on servanthood.

However, with this exchange between Peter and Jesus  
I've come to believe Jesus wanted to express  
His love in a simple and direct way .

Jesus washed his disciples' feet because he loved them.

He could have taught the lesson on servanthood  
By having the disciples wash one another's feet.

He didn't.

Instead, Jesus washed every disciple's feet  
Including Judas  
As a way to express his love for them.

And the only way they could receive this love  
Was to let go of their pride  
And let him, their leader, kneel before them.

It is a powerful lesson on Love's willingness  
To stoop before the feet of humankind.

What better way to show his love to them  
Then by washing their feet..

And what ultimate way to show his love  
Then his willingness to die for them.

But such is the love of Jesus.

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The church reenacts the events in the Upper Room  
When Jesus shared a simple meal  
Washed his disciples' feet

Offered and blessed bread and wine  
That represented his broken body and spilt blood  
The church calls Love Feast.

Because every aspect of what took place that night  
Is an expression of God's love for humankind

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I close with an essay by Macrina Wiederkehr  
Entitled God in an Apron

Supper was special that night.

There was both a heaviness and a holiness  
Hanging in the air.

We couldn't explain the mood.

It was sacred, yet sorrowful.

Gathered around that table  
Eating that solemn, holy meal  
Seemed to us as the most important meal  
We had ever sat down to eat.

We were dwelling in the heart of mystery.

Though dark the night, hope felt right  
As if something evil was about to be conquered.

And then suddenly the One we loved startled us all.

He got up from the table and put on an apron.

Can you imagine how we felt?  
GOD in an apron!"

Tenderness encircled us  
As He bowed before each of us.

He knelt and said

'I choose to wash your feet because I love you.'

God in an apron, kneeling . . .

I couldn't believe my eyes.

I was embarrassed until His eyes met mine.

I sensed my value then.

He touched my feet.

He held them in his strong, brown hands.

He washed them.

I can still feel the water.

I can still feel the touch of his hands.

I can still see the look in his eyes."

Then he handed me the towel and said

'As I have done so you must do.'

'Learn to bow, learn to kneel.'

'Let your tenderness encircle everyone you meet.'

'Wash their feet not because *you have to*,

Because *you want to*.'"

It seems I've stood two thousand years,

Holding the towel in my hands

'As I have done so you must do'

Keeps echoing in my heart.

'There are so many feet to wash'  
I keep saying.

'No,' I hear God's voice resounding through the years  
'There are only my feet.'  
'What you do for them you do for me.'"

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Our Maundy Thursday Love Feast feet washing service  
Will be a very sanitized affair.

We will come to church with our feet doubly washed  
Toenails clipped and fresh socks on our feet.

We will look at the service as symbolic  
A lesson to be learn of humble servanthood.

But what might it look like  
If we would go to a homeless shelter instead  
Like they did in Portland, OR

And provide a feetwashing ministry  
To those whose feet really need the care.

Could we be so bold?