

# Maundy Thursday

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

Seminarian Anne Wickland

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I'm sure many of us here, when foot washing comes to mind, we only think about Maundy Thursday, because it just really isn't something we do today. I have actually had multiple experiences with foot washing outside of a Maundy Thursday service. In high school, I went on many mission trips with my youth group. On the last night, while in small groups for work projects, the adult leader would wash our feet, and then pray with us, for us. Every time I cried in some capacity. Hearing from someone who knows you so well, like my adult leaders, and to have them wash my feet and share with me and God things they prayed for me, I felt that love and care that I can imagine the disciples felt when Jesus washed their feet.

In tonight's text, Jesus takes the time to stop the meal he's having with friends, to wash their feet.

This was something that a servant did, something that the disciples didn't think Jesus should do, that it was beneath him.

“Peter said to him, You'll never wash my feet.”

Eventually the disciples let Jesus do this humble act of service for them, and I can only imagine the emotions in the room.

Maybe they felt awkward and uncomfortable to have Jesus, Son of Man, doing such a lowly task. Adoration, that Jesus is showing such love and care. Confused as to why Jesus is doing such a grand gesture. They don't know that their time with him is running out.

Jesus has spent the last three years of his life traveling around with these disciples. He cares for them. Deeply.

*He* knows these are his last few moments with them, and wants to not only show them the care he has for them, but an example of what they could do to one another and others.

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Jesus has shown love to the disciples in many ways, and this is a final grand gesture, to show them a way to care for each other, those they know well and care for, but also those they haven't met yet.

When I was a senior in high school, I went to India with my synod's Bishop and a few other kids my age to visit the Lutheran church there that we had a partnership with.

After many train delays due to fog, and then an hour's long jeep ride to town, we were all exhausted. We had a short amount of time to regroup, and then we were all split up and went to our different host families.

I was with another girl, also named Anne, and we stayed with Dolly's family. We barely had time to set our stuff down, and then we were asked to sit, and take off our shoes and socks.

Dolly's parents were going to wash our feet.

At the time it felt awkward. Anne and I kept looking at each other. We knew to expect it, but it still felt surreal that someone we just met was washing our feet, to show their hospitality.

It was mainly getting our feet wet, and wiping us with many towels, but there was a love and care there that I never expected to receive from someone I just met, from someone who didn't speak the same language as me.

Dolly would translate most of the time, but we also spoke to each other in smiles and head nods. For the rest of my time as a guest in their home, I continuously felt the love and care that first showed up in the washing of my feet.

What does it look like to show intimate love to those we don't know? Dolly and her family were overwhelmingly hospitable, but it's a lot to ask someone to open their house to a stranger. Something I've been involved in recently is the Faith and Justice Collective, a community organizing group on campus. Our main issue we've been working on is Climate Justice. We're just in the beginning stages, but I know our work in this will impact not just our own lives, but the lives of people we don't even know. And I know that this congregation has done some amazing work with the Night Ministry, through advocacy of the new building site, and putting together meals for hundreds of people you don't know. It's through actions like these, where you know it will impact others positively, that shows intimate love to those we don't know.

Jesus loved his disciples and he wanted his last moments with them to show them that. He spends his last meal with his friends telling them to love one another, and then to share that love with others. It's an intimate moment that we're given an access to. And I think that through showing the disciples his love and care for them, Jesus is giving an example of how to show that love and kindness not just to each other, but to everyone they encounter, and that through that, everyone they encounter will know that they are followers of Jesus.

No matter if it's people we know dearly, or people we've just met or even people we've never met, we are encouraged to show that love and care. And that can be expressed in many ways; here Jesus is showing that in this humble act of service, of washing their feet.