

GOSPEL MESSAGE

April 1, 2021

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Loving Vulnerably

For many North American churchgoers Maundy Thursday is one of the most physically vulnerable occasions in the church year. Whereas other cultures view bare feet as an everyday facet of human life, North Americans tend to be a bit more squeamish when it comes to letting others see, let alone touch or wash, our feet. Feet come in many forms, shaped by the rhythm and circumstances of their own journeys. Feet are intimate, unique, and completely personal. The feet that enter our churches on this day may be cracked, frail, broken, or scarred.

The mere prospect of an encounter with any of these feet as a ritual component to Maundy Thursday worship can feel overwhelming and off-putting to some. It is no accident, though, that a command to love comes coupled with a moment of vulnerability. On the very night that Jesus commands us to love one another, we find him down at the feet of his protesting disciples, enacting a most vulnerable form of love: washing away the dust, dirt, and grime.

It would be one thing if this command to love only extended to people who look, act, and think like us, yet there is no hint in our gospel text that Judas's feet were excluded from Jesus' footwashing. This is a risky and difficult love, extended to those who betray us and hurt us, those whom we would rather call "enemy" than "friend." This kind of love is just as up-close and personal as an intimate encounter with broken, worried, tired, and worn-out feet. Living this kind of love can feel precarious, even dangerous.

If on this Maundy Thursday the thought of having your feet washed or of washing someone else's feet feels vulnerable to you, don't push away the feeling. Notice it. Perhaps you are closer than ever to understanding the radical nature of Jesus' command to love one another.

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