



SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

THE VERY REV. STEVEN L. THOMASON, DEAN AND RECTOR

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2026

EXODUS 12:1-14; PSALM 116:1, 10-17; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26; JOHN 13:1-17, 31b-35

MAUNDY THURSDAY— TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES

Tonight we are asked to take off our shoes. We who enter the holy space and time of the Triduum tonight—that three day observance that turns from life to death and back to life again—we are invited to take off our shoes.

Like the disciples who have come to Jerusalem with Jesus but do not fully understand—cannot fully understand what lies ahead for Jesus—we are invited by Jesus to take off our shoes. It is an unsettling directive.

In another place, at another time, perhaps it would be natural enough to go bare foot. At home perhaps, or by the pool... but not here. Not with one

another. Not in the midst of worship. My feet are too ugly. My feet are too smelly. I don't like anyone else touching my feet. All logical enough reasons not to, and yet Jesus asks us to do it anyway. To remove our shoes and have our feet washed.

Jesus lay aside his garments, girded himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet. How many miles had these feet walked with Jesus—rough, worn, dirty, tired feet...men's and women's feet. Surely children's feet, too. It was an intimate, humbling moment, as this man whom they knew as Lord and Master knelt to wash their

feet with humility and love and perhaps deep sadness. He knew what lay ahead for him; we do, too. It is a sacred gesture to do so here tonight with one another.

I wonder, as Jesus held those feet, if his thoughts might have taken him to the memories of their time together—the good times and the bad—and perhaps also where these feet might take them once he was gone from their side. What good news will be proclaimed from the tips of these toes? Where would their journeys of faith take them? Will they stand firm in the face of adversity—or will they simply sleek into the shadows?

Tonight we are asked to take off our shoes, and ponder where our feet have been and where we might be going? Are we willing to go where this liturgy will take us? It is a liturgy that moves us forthrightly from the washing of feet to the sharing of a meal of remembering to the starkness of a stripped altar.

Our liturgy tonight, so full of ritual action, symbol, and sacred commandments... our liturgy can be what propels us and balances us and opens us to truly be the people of God here and now. We go beyond thinking of feet in a literal way tonight, because this isn't really about feet. For many of us, our physical feet might not get us very far at all. Some of the most vibrant and passionate of God's people have no feet at all. We let this liturgy, then, with all its images, help us think about our relationship with God and our relationship with one another and our ministry in this community who hears Jesus' commandment once more to love one another, as he loves us.

As we move into this holy time of the Triduum, Jesus leads us into the darkness of the night, into the dark expectation of his impending suffering and death. In this darkness, he will pray. In this darkness, he'll have to trust in God's promise. If we take following Jesus seriously, if we accept the role of

a servant, we too, at one time or another may move into our own anguished Gardens of Gethsemane.

Our liturgy tonight will leave us here in the darkness. The meal we'll share will have been finished. Our feet will have been washed. The altar will be laid bare. The light gone. We'll be left in darkness. But this darkness will not be without hope. It will be a darkness filled with prayer, remembrance, and repentance.

Leave your shoes off for a while—whatever that means to you. Not just literally, so we can wash each other's feet here tonight as part of this liturgy. Leave them off figuratively when you depart from this place, too, so that you feel the earth beneath you shift along the arc of this Triduum journey—this three day observance that turns from life to death and back to life again.

John 13:1-17; 31b-35 *[Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also*

ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' 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."]



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