



A Service of Foot Washing  
1st Congregational United Church of Christ  
Maundy Thursday, March 24, 2016

Just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that the time had come to leave this world to go to the Father. Having loved his dear companions, he continued to love them right to the end. It was suppertime. The Devil by now had Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, firmly in his grip, all set for the betrayal.

Jesus knew that the Father had put him in complete charge of everything, that he came from God and was on his way back to God. So he got up from the supper table, set aside his robe, and put on an apron. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, drying them with his apron. When he got to Simon Peter, Peter said, “Master, *you* wash *my* feet?”

Jesus answered, “You don’t understand now what I’m doing, but it will be clear enough to you later.”

Peter persisted, “You’re not going to wash my feet—ever!”

Jesus said, “If I don’t wash you, you can’t be part of what I’m doing.”

“Master!” said Peter. “Not only my feet, then. Wash my hands! Wash my head!”

Jesus said, “If you’ve had a bath in the morning, you only need your feet washed now and you’re clean from head to toe. My concern, you understand, is holiness, not hygiene. So now you’re clean. But not every one of you.” (He knew who was betraying him. That’s why he said, “Not every one of you.”) After he had finished washing their feet, he took his robe, put it back on, and went back to his place at the table.

Then he said, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You address me as ‘Teacher’ and ‘Master,’ and rightly so. That is what I am. So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other’s feet. I’ve laid down a pattern for you. What I’ve done, you do. I’m only pointing out the obvious. A servant is not ranked above his master; an employee doesn’t give orders to the employer. If you understand what I’m telling you, act like it—and live a blessed life.

—John 13:1-17 **The Message (MSG)** Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson

## About Foot Washing

Foot washing is offered as a symbolic gift, not as a requirement. As the interchange between Peter and Jesus reports, it can be a bit awkward. There are several options for participation. You may choose one of the following:

- Remove both shoes. The pastor will wash your feet using a moist towel.
- Remove one shoe. The pastor will wash one foot.
- Leave your shoes on. The pastor will wipe the outside of your shoe as a symbolic gesture.

All participants will receive a prayer of blessing.

## Maundy Thursday

The name Maundy comes from Latin. It means mandate or commandment. In the Latin Bible it is the first word of Jesus' new commandment reported in John 15:12-15:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

Although foot washing, communion and the extinguishing of candles are common observances on Maundy Thursday, the commemoration is more about how we love each other than what specific acts we perform.