

Maundy Thursday service outline

Opening Sentence

*'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 ... and began to wash the disciples' feet...'*
John 13:3–5

Welcome

Today is Maundy Thursday. Maundy comes from 'mandate'. And what happened that first Maundy Thursday? Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment to *'love one another as I have loved you.'* So today can be called 'New Commandment Thursday.'

And today Christians around the world remember the Last Supper Jesus had with His disciples. It was His last meal before Judas betrayed Him, before He was put on trial in Jewish and then Roman courts, before being handed over to be executed on a cross.

Yet, though Jesus knew all this would take place, He comforted His disciples. He told them of the sorrows they would experience as He left them to die. He even told them they would all forsake Him — which they all denied.

But before He spoke of all these things to them, He got up from dinner, took on the form of a slave, and began to wash the disciples' feet. And it is this act we will consider in a moment.

Before I pray for us, have a moment of silence asking God to help you hear, understand, and receive His Word today.

Opening Prayer

Let me pray for us,

Blessed Lord,

you have caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:

grant that we may so hear them,

read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them,

that, by patience and the comfort of your holy word,

we may embrace and ever hold fast

the blessed hope of everlasting life,

*which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.***

Reading — John 13:1–17

Sermon — The King Who Washes Feet

* Notice

Join us tomorrow for Good Friday, where we will hear what happens after the Last Supper — when Jesus is Arrested, Tried, Crucified, then Buried. Then come back Sunday as we celebrate His rising again.

Closing Prayer

Let me close with this prayer,

O God,

your love was embodied in Jesus Christ,

*who washed the disciples' feet on the night of his betrayal:
wash us from the stain of sin,*

so that, in hours of danger, we may not fail,

but follow your Son through every trial,

and praise Him always as Lord and Christ,

*to whom be glory, now and for ever. **Amen.***

John 13:1–17

Maundy Thursday — The King Who Washes Feet

*Lord Jesus, reveal to us the kind of king you are, who would wash His disciples' feet. And wash us through your glorious word. For the everlasting glory of your name, **Amen.***

Us & Power

You learn a lot about people by the way they wield power.

Saparmurat Niyazov was Turkmenistan's dictator for 15 years from **November 1990 to December 2006...** during which he renamed a city and a meteorite after himself. He renamed September with the title of his autobiography *Ruhnama*. Banned dogs from the capital city because he didn't like their smell. And amassed a personal fortune of \$3 billion.

The singer *Mariah Carey* supposedly flew her dog first-class until it grew too big — so then she bought him a private jet. There are also rumours she only drinks through a straw and employs someone to hold her glass as she sips.

Well... if you were president of Turkmenistan? Or had vocal chords that could cover five octaves (!) gaining you a multi-million record contract... wouldn't you serve yourself?

Well, what does Jesus do with His power? Remember, He's the one who rode a donkey into Jerusalem and was welcomed as The King God had promised to send His people. So how does He wield His kingly power?

He wants you to know three things: 1) an Awesome Truth, 2) to make an Amazing Claim, and 3) point to a Deeper Need.

1) An Awesome Truth

Look with me at John ch.13, from middle of v.2,

*'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... '*

Now pause and look carefully at that sentence before we continue. Jesus *knows* God the Father has given Him **all things**. Do realise what that means? **All things** means **everything in the whole of Creation**. God the Father was giving His Son Jesus all His authority, all His power, all His dominion, all His strength, all His legions of angels, and more. **All of that was being handed to Jesus... and Jesus knew this**. How Jesus could have comprehended the scale of such power, I do not know, but He knew it was being given to Him.

So what does Jesus do with all this power and authority?

*'... [He] 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.'*

Remember, this is a pre-pedicure culture, where roads were covered in dust and animal filth, where people wore sandals or no shoes at all. Foot-washing was the lowest job imaginable. it was a job that said: *"I have no power, but if I did, I wouldn't be doing this."*

Yet Jesus, the image of the invisible God, the all-powerful king, prepares water, takes off His cloak, and begins to wash His disciples' feet like the lowliest slave. But why does He do this?

This awesome truth is that He is the all-powerful King of Kings who wants to *slave* for His people. He wields His power, not to strike, but to serve. There is nothing this good shepherd won't do for His sheep. Nothing is too demeaning.

Being God, He had every right to demand everyone bow to Him and wash His feet... but He chose to serve. That's the kind of leader He is. And sometimes we glimpse such leadership in others. And if you read the gospel accounts of His life, you'll see this was always how He led, by serving others, never acting selfishly. It should stagger us to think that **the** man who deserved to be served and who could have demanded to be served, *always* served others. He served them regardless of who they were, regardless of what they'd done (or not done), however they'd treated Him — He slaved for others, always doing what was best for them.

And this same Jesus invites anyone to belong to Him. That means anyone can know and experience Him serving them. That is certainly an awesome truth, that The King of the universe is willing to serve *you* if you let Him.

2) An Amazing Claim

Here it is: *If you live like Jesus, you'll be happier than living like a wealthy dictator or successful pop-star.*

Part of me would quite like to enjoy the lifestyle of the powerful or popular...

I could employ others to serve my every need. It would be quite something to have a single day go the way I want it to go — to have every desire met. Don't you ever dream of such a day where everything goes your way?...

No! says Jesus, v.15, “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you...” v.17, “Now if you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

Now to be “blessed” is to enjoy life as it was designed by God to be — full of freedom and fulfilment. With Him you discover who you really are because He made you. Jesus' strange claim is that the path to “the blessed life” does not lie in using our power to serve ourselves, but in using it to slave for other — just as He did. He slaves for His friends; then tells them to slave for each other.

This goes against the way we naturally operate. It tips it upside down. It tells us that we win as we lose; we gain true blessing as we serve. But how can that make sense?! Well it doesn't... unless we realise that we don't need to serve ourselves... because the all-powerful King Jesus serves us! When a person knows they have a King who is always serving them they are truly free, and can now use their power for others.

A younger man once told me about a boss he once had. He was demanding, never thanked him, nor anyone else. His boss didn't care for him, *only* what he could squeeze out of him. And it was crushing.

... But then he went to work for another boss. And even before he started working for him he felt free, because he'd spoken to him enough to know he was a man who lovingly served others. For the first time in a long time he looked forward to going to work.

He felt free under this boss. And not surprisingly, he flourished under him. He no longer had to spend all his energy protecting himself; he was now safe and free to re-direct his energies elsewhere.

When a person knows they have a King who is always serving them they are set free, and can now use their power for others. **They are set free to bless others and are blessed as they do so.**

King Jesus says, *“Every one of my people serve.”* Following Him is about whole-heartedly seeking to serve like Him. To live in a way the world does not understand and to know true blessing. Those who have tried it have found it does not fail.

“You are blessed if you do them”

Lastly,

3) A Deeper Need

The truth that Jesus is the King who slaves for His people, and the amazing claim that true blessing comes by living like Him, points us to a deeper need each of us have.

What did you make of Peter’s response when Jesus went to wash his feet? Look to v.6. Peter asks his Lord Jesus in astonishment and disbelief, *“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”* And King Jesus replies, *“You do not understand what I am doing, but later you will understand.”*

In one sense Peter did understand that Jesus was washing his feet. But in another sense, at that time, Peter did not understand Jesus was pointing him (and us as we read today) to a deeper truth Peter would only understand “later.” It is a truth Jesus hints at when He tells him, *“Unless I wash you, you have no share in me.”*

Jesus is saying, *“Unless you let me slave for you in order to wash you clean, you cannot be my subject or my friend.”* Jesus is telling Peter that foot-washing, demeaning though it is, will not be the most horrendous thing He will go through in order to serve Peter. He is saying that Peter’s feet, dirty and disgusting though they are, are not the part of him that most needs cleansing. This King will go *even* lower than a slave. And He will do it to clean His subjects.

Peter doesn’t understand. We wouldn’t have, either, had we been there. Maybe you don’t get what Jesus is saying. But that was Jesus’ point — Peter would only understand “later.” **Only *after* the events of the next 72 hours would Peter come to understand what He needed Jesus to do for him...** And what does King Jesus do for Peter? For all who follow Him?

He dies on the cross for their sins, thus washing them clean inside of everything that separated them from belonging to God.

Then, He rises to new life for them to give them eternal life, that they might remain with Him and His people forever in His everlasting kingdom, never to be separated from His love.

Friends, look at how King Jesus wields His power. How do you respond to The King who washes His disciples?

Spend a moment now doing business with God. Look at King Jesus. Do you recognise you need Him to wash you? Will you let Him? He is willing, do not doubt that. And if you have let Him wash you, are you imitating Him? If not, why not? You also look to King Jesus. See what He has done, how far He has gone to wash you, to free you. A moment of silent prayer...