

Our Footwashing Lord

Scripture Reading — John 13:1-17

He poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. — John 13:5

As a navy chaplain I led a retreat for about 25 people. They were hurt, broken souls hoping for God's healing. The planning team decided our closing worship should include footwashing. Everyone sat in a circle and, after singing and prayers and a brief message on John 13, I washed the feet of the person to my left. She then did the same to the next person—and so on around the circle.

We thought some in the group might have difficulty washing someone else's feet. But instead, several could hardly bear to have their feet washed.

In that exercise I learned a great lesson: it's painful to receive grace. That's why Peter didn't want Jesus washing his feet. Back then people walked dusty roads and wore sandals everywhere. Hospitable hosts usually had a servant wash their guests' feet. So Peter protested, not being able to grasp that Jesus would serve him with such grace. Dirty-footed and filthy-souled sinners need his grace.

For the discipline of service, Jesus is our role model. He stooped to wash not only his disciples' dirty feet but also the souls of sinners. By following Christ's example, we find that in our humblest acts of service we have also served Jesus, our Servant-King who first served us.

Prayer

Humble, gracious Lord, you have set the bar of service for us to emulate. Grant us the grace and humility to serve even the least of your brothers and sisters. We pray in your name. Amen.

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Written by Norman Brown — <https://today.reframemedia.com/authors/norman-f-brown>

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