

Some Reflections for Maundy Thursday

Jesus washes the feet of his disciples

All four gospels include an account of what we call the 'last supper' that Jesus shared with his friends, but only the gospel of John (in chapter 13) goes on to describe Jesus washing his disciples' feet, something that a humble servant would normally do for guests. Many churches include an actual washing of feet in services on this day, although some people can find it an awkward and embarrassing experience.

In recent years I have been on several long pilgrimage walks, and I have discovered that walkers talk endlessly about their feet, and, often, what is wrong with them – about boots and shoes, socks, blisters and plasters.

On one pilgrimage, we were offered a question to reflect on as we walked each day, and one day that question was:

Am I comfortable in my boots?

It is a good question, suggesting deeper questions beyond the practicalities.

Am I comfortable with myself, who I am, and what I am doing?

Am I comfortable in my body, in my identity, my roles in life?

Am I comfortable in my pilgrimage, my journey of faith?

And below all these is the further question that we may come to – is being comfortable what we should expect, or what matters most?

In John's gospel, we are told that Peter was very uncomfortable with the idea of letting Jesus wash his feet, until he came to understand that he needed to accept the humble loving service of Jesus, in order to be a disciple.

It takes one kind of humility to serve, to 'wash the feet' of others, and another kind of humility to let our feet be washed, to let ourselves be served by others.

On this special day, God in Jesus Christ calls us to be ready to do both, to serve and to be served, to find God's comfort when we need it, and to be open to the discomfort that may be part of God's work to transform us and make us new.

Jesus said to his disciples:

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13, v. 14-15)

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