

# **First Presbyterian Church of Plymouth, Michigan**

**Maundy Thursday**

**“I Have Washed Your Feet”**

**(Focusing on Last Supper of Jesus Christ with His Disciples)**

**Thursday, April 1, 2021**

**Brendan Ashley, Special Guest Speaker**

## **Rev. Emily Riley Campbell – Welcome and Announcements**

Welcome to worship at First Presbyterian Church of Plymouth and this Holy Week service. Today is Maundy Thursday and on this holy day we remember that Jesus gathered with his disciples in the Upper Room. We remember that before Jesus ate, he took a towel from around his waist and washed his disciples' feet, providing us with an example of humble service that we are called to do unto others as he has done for us.

On this holy day we also remember that Christ took bread and broke it. He took the cup and he blessed it. We remember that Last Supper and all that it signifies as we celebrate Holy Communion together later in our service.

I am delighted to be assisting Brendan Ashley and our Associate Pastor Ashley Ashley in leading this service for you. Brandon and Ashley are both graduates of Pittsburgh Seminary and we are delighted that Brendan is able to preach here in Plymouth for the very first time. I'm also thrilled to welcome back Ben Fisher and Kylie Phillips-Fisher to this service. Ben and Kylie were regular visitors to our Upper Room service and some of you may remember that they are Jeff Phillips' daughter and son-in-law. We are thrilled that they are sharing their musical talents with us on this day.

Finally I want to give a huge thank you to Susan Underhill who is putting together all four of our Holy Week online worship services for us. It's a monumental editing task and we are so grateful to her and to God for her ability.

Before we begin, I do want to remind you that our Good Friday service will be available for you to watch, beginning at any time, tomorrow. I'll be leading this service along with James Moore, a dear friend of this congregation and an outstanding tenor.

Our Easter service will be available for you to watch online anytime on Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>. Alternatively, you can attend one of our live parking lot services, at either 9:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. We ask that you would pre-register your vehicle through our church's website, to let us know you're planning on coming.

Now, friends, our service is about to begin, but before it does, I'd ask you to please take a minute wherever you are and gather the communion elements that you have freely available for you at home, so that we can share in communion together later in our service.

Once we've paused this video for just a minute to gather those elements, Ashley will come forward to lead us in our opening prayer.

**[Pause to gather Communion elements]**

**Ashley S. Ashley, Associate Pastor — Opening Prayer**

Let us pray. Gracious and loving God, your love was embodied in Jesus Christ, who washed his disciples' feet on the night he was betrayed. Wash from us the stain of sin, so that in the presence of danger we can stand tall; in the face of trial, that we can remember to whom we belong; and in the midst of temptation, we can offer up songs and words of praise to your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Kylee Phillips – Fisher and Ben Fisher play and sing “Hosanna”**

**Ashley S. Ashley — Scripture Reading, Philippians 2:5-11**

<sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was<sup>l</sup> in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,

<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

**Brendan Ashley — Scripture Reading, John 13:1-20**

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper <sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup> got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> He came

to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” <sup>8</sup> Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” <sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” <sup>10</sup> 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.” <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

<sup>12</sup> 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? <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. <sup>17</sup> If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. <sup>18</sup> I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, ‘The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ <sup>19</sup> I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. <sup>20</sup> Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”

Jesus is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

### **Brendan Ashley — Sermon: “I Have Washed Your Feet”**

Welcome, FPCP. My name is Brendan Ashley, and if you don't know me yet, I am Ashley Ashley's husband. On this Maundy Thursday I just wanted to say ‘thank you’ for letting me preach God's word to you!

So here we are, in John, chapter 13, and in the context of the gospel we are in the second half, which spans from chapter 13 to chapter 21. Interestingly enough, chapters 13 through 19 alone take place on one Jewish day. A Jewish day starts in the evening on one day and then on the next day in the evening is when it ends.

As one of my favorite missiologists, someone who studies mission, said so well about Jesus' farewell discourse, “At this point in the gospel we move out of the streets into the quiet of a room.” Jesus' ministry is now complete. He enters into the final days of his life, for everything Jesus has said and done has been fulfilled in his death and resurrection. But before we arrive there, we find ourselves worshipping on a Thursday, and know this is no April Fool's joke.

Will you pray with me. Lord, may the meditations of my heart and the words on my lips give you glory. I just ask the Holy Spirit, that as congregants listen to this sermon, they would be strengthened in their minds, their hearts, and their souls as they go out into the rest of their day. Amen.

We are gathered here on this Maundy Thursday as a commemoration of the Last Supper. That quiet room is filled with Jesus and the disciples. They have gathered for the supper where Jesus offers His final discipleship courses to prepare them for when He is gone.

It is understood that this takes place the evening before the high Jewish festival of Passover. In connection to this, Jesus, the Passover lamb, is to be prepared for the cross on Good Friday. As you heard in John 13, verse 1, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." It is a room filled with love that echoes in our hearts today.

There is an aside in verse 2 about the devil entering Judas, the one who betrays Jesus. It is a warning to His own not to take His love for granted. Regardless, Jesus still washes Judas' feet.

Jesus dies for us and our sins on the cross. Jesus lets the disciples know this in order to encourage them. Sin and death will not overwhelm or surprise them now that we know that the Father has given power and understanding to Jesus. He doesn't use this to force them to join the kingdom. Instead, he surprises them.

He arises from the table in verses 4 through 11. The foot-washing, the first discipleship course, reveals Jesus' love for his disciples by sharing with them who He is and what He is doing. After he rises from the table, he takes off his outer garment and wraps it around himself. Customarily, a guest's feet would have been washed as soon as they entered the home, namely because their feet were filthy from walking around everywhere.

Bruner, one of my favorite commentators on the gospel of John, rather astutely points out the simple fact that this event takes place while the supper is occurring. This tells us that this was not the customary doorway foot-washing. Jesus, himself, wants to do this foot-washing for His guests. On this especially unusual evening, during supper, Jesus has reversed His role. The one who is our Lord and Savior takes on the form of a slave. There is nowhere in ancient literature of a superior washing the feet of slaves.

Philippians, chapter 2, verses 6 through 8, illustrate this very thing. "Who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave. Being born in human likeness and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross."

In John 13 we see what kind of teacher and lord Jesus is through his foot-washing. In our passage today, Jesus reveals how we must orient ourselves properly in the kingdom. In particular, as Frederic Louis Godet accurately observes, he shows them that in this kingdom the means of mounting higher *is to descend*, and the way to first place is to put oneself without hesitation *in the last place*. As our Lord, He invites us to worship and revere Him, and as our teacher He wants us to follow after Him and learn His ways. He *expects* us to get that *low* because He first did.

Next, we know Jesus' love for us by what he did for us in the foot-washing. He begins by pouring water into the basin. Then, one by one, he cleans each of the disciples' feet. This act draws us to what he will do on Good Friday. "He so dons our flesh and goes open-eyed to the cross, that immediately is revealed supremely, at the moment of greatest weakness, the greatest service."

He doesn't merely have the appearance of a slave. He is completely obedient to the will of the Father even unto his death on the cross as one. And yet just as we nod our heads in agreement with the importance of this act, "Yes I believe this," we read in verse 6 that

Peter balks at the notion that Jesus, as Lord and teacher would ever appear or act as a slave for them. Peter exclaims, "Lord, surely you are not going to wash my feet!"

According to D. A. Carson, some Jews insisted that Jewish slaves should not be required to wash others' feet. This job should be reserved for gentile slaves or for women and children and pupils. It makes perfect sense that Jesus' role reversal and act shocked Peter. Jesus is flipping Peter's world upside down and invariably ours as well. It isn't just who He is that shocks Peter; it is also that he gets down and washes their feet! Can you take a moment to imagine how you would respond to Jesus washing your feet?

Next let's dive into what the foot-washing means. First, the foot-washing means that out of love for His own to the end, Jesus wants to *know* his church. In verse 8, Jesus emphatically responds to Peter as to why he must wash his feet. Jesus says, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

'To wash' comes from the Greek word 'nipto', which in a ritualistic sense means *to wash partially*. It is unfathomable to imagine your boss at a work retreat saying, "Hey, as part of a team building exercise, I'm going to get down and I'm going to wash every one of your feet today. Is that weird?!!

Our relationship to God will no longer be obstructed by our fallen nature because Jesus takes on our sinful nature for us. In doing this he conquers sin and death by taking it with him to the grave. The washing of the feet is a sign of that total overturning of the powers of this world in which the majesty of God is manifest in the menial service of a slave. To accept this is to be converted and nothing can be added to this. There is nothing in the world that can obstruct us from intimate connection to God, not even in verse 9 where, as usual, Peter overreacts and wants Jesus not just to wash his feet, but to wash his hands and his head and everything. But that isn't necessary.

Secondly, as we read in verse 10, the foot-washing reveals that Jesus makes us fully clean *in Him*. We are completely clean! Church, this really is good news! In verse 10, the text uses another word 'to wash', 'pleno', which means to wash the whole body. We no longer need ritual cleanings to be in the right standing with God.

I'm not saying you should not get your regular dental cleanings or "don't wash your hands regularly." Keep doing those things, please!

He takes away the stain of sin and death by taking it on Himself to the cross. That security is sacramentally sealed with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our baptism. That security can never be taken from us and we don't need to add to it.

Also, in the Lord's supper, in the body and the blood of Christ, we have communion with Jesus. Bruner calls us to remember these things daily. As we practice them on Sundays, we take this into our day-to-day lives:

*"Let us let ourselves be loved by the Lord. Let Jesus be our Servant-Lord, not our conscience. Give in. Be washed, simply because Jesus wants to wash us and not because we think or feel we deserve to be washed."*

So how is Jesus calling you to know him more? How is he 'washing' you? Take a moment to reflect on that.

Now finally in verses 12 through 20, Jesus arises and returns to the table. Jesus washed our feet out of his unfailing love, to establish relationship with us and to make us clean.

Now we move from the Christian *story* to Christian *living*. His ministry is connected to and continues in the church that shines a light to the world. Jesus calls us to Christian living when he says in verse 14, “wash one another's feet.” In verse 15, then, “You should do as I have done to you.”

Jesus laid down a new way of living, as Bruner unpacks this Christian ethic so well for us in the foot washing quote. It also shows disciples how they can live their lives in the most blessedly possible way, in mutual service, submission, forgiveness and patience, a lot of patience. Jesus commands us to be servants of one another. He does this so that there is no confusion as to who He is or who the best is in our group or who deserves to be served the most. He has laid aside his life for us all, and the debt which we owe to him is to be discharged by our subjection to our neighbor in loving service.

Now, as we close, I want you to think about the places, people and things that have been so graciously gifted to you. But Jesus is calling you to do as He has done. Where can you be a better listener to your kids and spouse, have less control and coercion in the office, offer flexible hospitality as we navigate the pandemic, confess mistakes with neighbors clients or strangers?

Perhaps it is just in reawakening to God's disruptive and yet beautiful grace during this year's Good Friday service and Easter Sunday service. Amen.

### **Ashley S. Ashley, Associate Pastor — Call to Communion and Prayers of the People**

As we gather around the communion table today, I am reminded of the words of Jesus. He said, “Come, all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and I will give you rest for your souls.”

Fiends, let us come before our Lord now in prayer, remembering that we are all invited here today. Let us pray.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these, your gifts of bread and wine. May the bread we break, and the cup that is blessed, be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. By your Spirit, unite us with the living Christ and with all who are baptized in His name, that we may be one in ministry, in every place. As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world.

Lead us, oh God, by the power of your Spirit to live as love commands, bound to Christ. Set us free for joyful obedience and glad service. As Jesus gave His life for ours, help us to live our lives for others with humility and persistent courage.

Give us strength to serve you faithfully until the promised day of resurrection when, with the redeemed of all the ages, we will feast with you at your table in glory.

As we await that time, bind us together in prayer, as we recite the words you taught us to pray saying,

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power and the glory forever.  
Amen.

### **Rev. Emily Riley Campbell – Sacrament of Communion**

On the night that he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread and after he gave thanks to God his father, he broke it saying, “This is my body that has been broken for you. Do this in memory of me.”

In the same way, after supper Jesus took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink from it, do so remembering me, for as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again.”

These are the gifts of God given to the people of God. Let us share this communion meal together.

### **Kylie Phillips-Fisher and Ben Fisher play and sing “Jesus, We Love You”**

### **Rev. Emily Riley Campbell – Prayer**

Would you please pray with me. Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the way that you have both fed us and blessed us at your holy table. We praise you once again for your humble example of service. We marvel at your selfless sacrifice. We thank you for providing the grace that covers all our sins, which sustains our faith, both now and throughout eternity. Please send us forth from here today, strengthened and blessed to serve as your arms and feet at work in the world. This we ask in your Son's most precious name. Amen.

### **Kylee Phillips-Fisher and Ben Fisher play and sing “Lead Me to the Cross”**

### **Brandan Ashley – Benediction and Blessing**

As we depart from this Maundy Thursday service, just as Jesus has washed our feet and made us whole, may we go this week and serve one another. Amen.

