

# Maundy Thursday

Readings: Exodus 12:1–4, (5–10), 11–14

Corinthians 11:23–26, John 13:1–17, 31b–35

A lot of people are squeamish about revealing their feet, especially having them touched! But in Jesus' day the custom was very different. Feet, covered only in sandals, would quickly become covered in dust - and worse, as chamber pots would be tipped into the streets and animals would leave their droppings on the roads. On arrival at a house, a servant would remove the footwear and wash the feet as a practical necessity and sign of hospitality, performed on behalf of the host. It was a menial task, so although the act of foot washing was common, for the master to do it - in the middle of a meal - was unheard of. It was customary for diners to wash their hands between courses, so a bowl of water and a towel would have been available at the table. <sup>6</sup>



## The voice of Peter

“We arrived for the meal, and everyone was relaxed and relieved to have a chance to rest, but Jesus was strangely anxious. We settled at the table and everyone began to eat and discuss the events of the day, when Jesus suddenly rose and took off his robe. The chat died down and we watched in silence as he picked up a basin of clean water, tied a towel about him, knelt and began washing our feet. We'd already been cleaned by the servant, so I quickly glanced at my feet to check for dirt... nothing. Jesus worked his way round to me. I couldn't let him do this! - so I argued, but he insisted. Looked me right in the eye he did, and said 'Unless I wash you, you have no part of me'. So I told him to do my hands and my head, too! I want to be totally washed by him, because I don't want to miss out on anything... although I wasn't sure exactly what he was doing at first. This man is always turning everything upside down... just when we think we understand, he comes up with a new way to throw us off course, to teach us something new... he's always right. Always.”



Allowing ourselves to feel vulnerable goes against the grain. It can bring feelings of shame, guilt, and whole host of other discomforts. But Jesus uses our feelings to reach us when he needs to convey a message of importance; in this passage he teaches the disciples, and us, that no one is too great to serve, or too proud to receive.

◆ Infinite, intimate God; this night you kneel before your friends and wash our feet. Bound together in your love, trembling, we drink your cup and watch. <sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Zondervan (2019) John 12:5.

<sup>7</sup> The New Zealand Prayer Book, in Angela Ashwin (ed), The Book of a Thousand Prayers: Zondervan (1996), p.336