



*And in the great silence
the planet rested,
the people rethought their focus
and slowed,
unfolded from the weight
of lament and fear,
and returned as a world newly formed.*

—Ana Lisa de Jong

PALM SUNDAY 4 APRIL 2020

Note—*If you have chosen the foot washing option for today, please prepare the space with a large basin, warm water, clean towels and lotion. Before you begin worship, familiarise yourself with the instructions under the Moving into Prayer section for this option. This will help you maintain the flow of worship. Foot washing is a bodily prayer that can speak powerfully beyond words.*

Gathering Prayer

I awaken to love's light and greet the new day
not with shouts in a crowded city street
nor joyful songs of a congregation
but with the stillness of my heart
I praise you, my Teacher and my Friend.

On the threshold of this holy week,
I, too, am uncertain about the future.
I do not know what tomorrow will hold.
But we have this moment and this day.

So, come to me, Spirit of Christ,
as you rode into Jerusalem amidst the waving palms.
Come, and I will welcome you.

Scripture Reading — John 13:1–17, 33–35

John's Gospel paints a picture of the beloved community of Christ. It is not always a depiction of how things were, but a vision of how life in the Spirit of Christ might be. The story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet only appears in the Gospel of John. While seeking to convey the humble service to which we are called, it speaks, too, of the dismantling of status, rank and hierarchy within Christian community. Jesus' act reveals a way of being and loving that dissolves every distinction. All are equal in the eyes of God. All are one in Christ.

Read the passage slowly. If you are with others, one person might read aloud.

You might read through the passage once, use the imaginative reflection suggestions below, then read through the passage again when you are ready.

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. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. 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, 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. Jesus came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 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." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." 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? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

"Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

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- Imagine Jesus kneeling before you, washing your feet. Feel the warm water and loving touch. See the grime and weariness of your life swirl in the water surrounding your feet.
 - Now imagine Jesus kneeling before and washing the feet of someone (or the kind of person) who is difficult for you to see as an equal, to enfold in community alongside yourself.
 - What, if anything, has been revealed through your imaginative listening? Simply notice without judgement. It is where you are in the moment. Hold what has been revealed gently before yourself and God for a time...

Moving into Prayer—Art Engagement Option



The Washing of Feet by Sieger Köder

German painter Sieger Köder was a prisoner of war during WWII due to his participation in the Catholic *Neudeutschland*—a Nazi resistance movement founded in 1919. At the age of 41, Köder studied theology and was ordained a priest in 1971.

Notice the depiction of Peter's stance in this image. One hand draws Jesus in while the other seems to want to hold him at a distance. You might take on Peter's stance yourself... Focus on the hand pushing away... How does this feel? Now focus on the hand drawing in... How does this feel? How does it speak into your friendship with God at this time?

Can you see the reflection of Jesus' face in the bowl of water? What does Jesus' face convey to you as he looks through the mess of life?

Moving into Prayer—Foot Washing Option

If you are washing another's feet, pour an amount of warm water into the basin. Gently remove the other's footwear and tenderly place their feet in the basin. Pour more water over the person's feet and use your hands to scoop water over them. Dry their feet and message them with lotion. Repeat until everyone who wishes has had a chance to wash and have their feet washed.

Alternatively, wash your own feet in a similar manner and message them with lotion.

Contemplate the overlooked, neglected nature of feet. Give thanks for the burden they bear... the places they take you... the service they provide... May you honour them with these moments of tenderness and care. As you do, consider how Jesus befriended those who are often overlooked, who are regarded as unsavoury or insignificant; the ways Jesus disregarded class and distinction, welcoming all who would believe in him into his beloved community.

Now or later, you might choose to talk with one another about the experience:

- What feelings and thoughts arose during this time?
- How did this experience illuminate the Gospel reading for you?
- What more do you understand about being a beloved community?

Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God, through your incarnation you came near to us and, in Jesus' love, we see you are not indifferent to nor repulsed by life's messiness. You dare to get close to every human reality—the ordinary graces as well as seasons of suffering and pain. Confident of your care and understanding, hear us as we pray: *Loving God, be with and for us.*

For your Church that we may be a reconciling people, looking beyond human-made distinctions in order to see and honour the Light in one another: *Loving God, be with and for us.*

For your creation that our land might be restored and harmony increase across the earth, your sacred body: *Loving God, be with and for us.*

For all whose lives are impacted by the virus—those anxious about food, employment, and housing, those who are sick and those who care for them, those isolated at home experiencing unsafety, neglect or loneliness: *Loving God, be with and for us.*

For leaders around the world who must make decisions in the midst of uncertainty and unknowing—may they always keep before them the well-being of the whole, especially those who are vulnerable: *Loving God, be with and for us.*

For our friends and family... (*prayers are offered silently or aloud*), for ourselves... (*prayers are offered silently or aloud*): *Loving God, be with and for us.*

Disciples' Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

In prayer and contemplation, we have been shown that other way of Jesus.

Touched by grace and ennobled by love, let us go forth to live
as disciples of the beloved community of Christ.

The love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Spirit be with us.