

Introduction

- Why is this here?
 - always a good question to ask!
 - being clear on something's purpose will help us understand and respond truly!
- So, why is the incident with Jesus washing the disciples feet here?
- I suspect that if I asked most Christians they'd say something like:
 - we need to follow Jesus' example...
 - humble service...
- All of which is true, but not the starting point of the passage
 - that's where Jesus' concludes, but it is important to see where he begins!

Foot Washing and the Cross

- God's gracious dealing with us is most fundamentally shown in Jesus' death on the Cross
 - and its that death that Jesus was trying to explain to his frightened, bewildered disciples in the hours before it happened
 - ...and the words he uses are only a small part of his explanation.
- Rather his explanation takes the form of action, symbolic action, revealing something of what is happening around them.
- Double-entendre of v.1 - showed them "full extent of his love"
 - not only a reference to acted picture he is about to perform,
 - but also to the object of that picture, his own death the next day on the cross.
 - (cf map of London Underground; it is not the network of tunnels itself, but it points towards it and makes intelligible that network)
- Disciples are about to have Jesus taken from them in death - why?
- He seeks to show them...
 - ...as he takes off his outer-garment, takes the basin of water, and starts to wash their feet.
- He acts out the cleansing the Cross will effect.
- Freely offered to all - Judas was still in the room - imagine Jesus coming to wash his feet!?!
 - But he also forces them to realise just what that cleansing means:
 - accepting that they need cleansed from sin (Peter's "you shall never...") - an admission & step we too need to make;
 - and that merely being present at the outward signs of that cleansing are no guarantee of that cleansing (church, membership, communion, ...) - an attitude we need to guard against.
- All of this was GRACE: God's Riches At Christ's Expense
 - Jesus emptying himself of any the honour due his name, gave himself up for the good of his disciples, and for our sake too.
 - it's the heart of the gospel:
 - grace poured out to us as Christ gave himself to take our punishment, to save us from our sins
 - and in response the humility to acknowledge our need and accept the free offer of salvation, rejecting the pride which says we can contribute anything to our salvation.
- This is the way God brings us to himself, welcomes us into his family.
- This, however, is not the end of God's purpose.

Bricks and Mortar...

- People collect the strangest things!
- I wouldn't be surprised if somewhere in the world there was someone who collected bricks!
 - red ones; yellow ones; grey ones; half-size ones; special purpose ones!
 - you can imagine them keeping that collection carefully, maybe even mounting

- some of those bricks for best effect, highlighting their texture by special lighting!
- But, if that was all they did, that person would have missed the real beauty of bricks!
 - their attractiveness does not lie predominantly in their intrinsic beauty!
 - but in their ability to be built into a huge variety of different buildings
- On its own a brick is, well, just a brick!
- but put them together in the right way, and you get a house, a home, a school, a library, a factory...
- God is not merely interested in bricks - in seeing a bunch of individuals come to faith - but he is also interested in buildings
 - in building those individuals into his church
- That's where the practical outworking of grace in our lives starts to come into play:
 - including the example of humble service that Jesus' here offers!

Grace of Service

- And its to that humility that Christ turned his attention as he explained his action to his disciples.
- As well as using the picture of the foot-washing to explain the significance of the cross, he also took the opportunity to challenge them to live with the same kind of humility.
- There is a command here:
 - "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." (v. 14)
 - 3 things about that command worth drawing attention to:

Jesus' did something Ordinary

- Jesus' action of washing the disciples' feet was both ordinary and yet extraordinary
 - it was a common, daily task
 - but doing it to others was not
 - it was viewed as such a humiliating and lowly job that it could not be required of a Jewish slave
- Yet Jesus, Son of God, ruler of heaven and earth, before whom angels in their thousands bowed down to worship...
 - ...stooped down to the dirty, smelly feet of his followers, and did an act of service and love which was deemed beneath all others
- Jesus shows that his people will be transformed from bricks into building as they stoop in service:
 - service and humility go hand in hand
- Jesus did something ordinary - but he did it with humility

Jesus' did something Easy

- How do you get in the Guinness Book of Records?
 - you do something difficult, something no one else has done...
 - you run the fastest, grow the tallest, live the longest, push over the greatest number of dominoes...
 - I remember kids TV in the late 70's or early 80's where (probably Blue Peter) featured attempts on the world record for toppling dominoes - never did figure out the Japanese guys who were trying to do it in an earthquake zone where the earth kept shaking and knocking their dominoes over!!
 - we laugh - but it was hard to set all those dominoes up!
- Jesus' act of feet-washing is remembered not because it was difficult or required particular skill:
 - you don't need a degree to wash someone else's feet...
- Its remembered because of the love that enabled him to do so:

- we may feel what we have to offer is small, or even insignificant, but the attitude in which it is done is of far more importance

- Jesus did something easy - but he did it in love!

Jesus' did something Loving

- I wonder whether you've ever really thought about just when Jesus washed the disciples feet?
 - this was an amazing act of love
 - but it wasn't inspired by his appreciation for the disciples!!
- Jesus would have had every right to feel frustrated and let down by some of the disciples, and betrayed by another:
 - it is during the course of this meal that a dispute arises amongst the disciples as to "which of them was to be considered greatest" (Luke 22:24)
 - the disciples still seemed incapable of grasping what the kingdom of God was really about, or what it truly meant to follow the Messiah, and so were still looking for attaining worldly forms of power and prestige
 - and Jesus washed the feet of Judas, knowing full well that this companion and friend of his for the last three years had already betrayed him
 - and the rest of the disciples will desert him shortly
 - and yet Jesus still does this remarkable act of love
- Our acts of service cannot be motivated by appreciation of others or thinking that people "deserve it"
 - what happens to those who don't deserve?
- Instead we are called to love, to serve, simply because "God is love"
- Jesus' did something loving - even though they didn't deserve it

Conclusion

- Grace - the Cross - the washing - the example and command to do the same
 - ordinary things, done with humility
 - easy things, done in love
 - loving things, done even when they aren't deserved
- Church, Community and Change:
 - heading towards thinking how we can serve our community
- Maybe feel to this point:
 - them, not me
 - the Church, Community and Change Co-ordinating Team....
 - but the reality is we each of us have ordinary, easy things to offer, for people who don't deserve it
 - just us we are ordinary people who don't deserve what Jesus did for us on the Cross!

Fill in the gifts & skills form

- have a few minutes of quiet to do that, to reflect on what we have heard
- and they will be collected as part of the offering in a moment
- folk will come and collect them from the centre aisle