



Resource Centre

From our Churches

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How Beautiful are the Feet **A Good Friday Communion and Footwashing Service** Romans 10:14-15

***Note:** On stage were 2 sculpted life-size feet, borrowed from Floradale Mennonite Church. Four different actors offered the monologues. As is our Good Friday tradition at St. Jacobs, the service included both footwashing and communion components.*

Gathering at the Foot of the Cross

Prelude for Silent Reflection

Quartet Popule Meus Tomas Luis de Victoria

Call to Worship Romans 10:14-15

I am reading from Romans 10:-14-15. Like the song we just heard, it begins with questions.

“But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

How beautiful are the feet! Seriously? Are feet really that beautiful? We try to cover up our feet – keep them shod and protected and out of view from those around us. Feet can be dirty and stinky. We can feel vulnerable and uncomfortable about our feet. Feet are not the first thing we think of as the most beautiful of our body parts.

And yet this passage speaks of those who proclaim good news as having beautiful feet - as they walk the walk and talk the talk. Today, Good Friday, as we enter the story of the Passion of Jesus, we might notice the feet all around us. Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, Peter would not allow Jesus to wash his feet, the Disciples put one foot in front of the other as they tried to follow Jesus, and we even meet the character of Simon from Cyrene, who

ended up carrying the cross of Jesus as he walked to his crucifixion. Today we gather at the foot of the cross. We will wash each other's feet and we will share communion. Let us do so with the awareness that our feet have brought us to Jesus, the source of good news.

(Sing and repeat several times, the congregation joining – “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news” - by Bryan Moyer Suderman)

Prayer

O God, we come today to the foot of the cross. We come with our feet, like our lives, tired and dirty and needing to experience good news. Wash us, prepare us, and send us out to proclaim the gospel. Let us enter into the story and passion of Jesus, who “from his head and hands and feet did sorrow and love flow mingled down.” Let that amazing love and sorrow meet together in our lives, and may we offer our souls, our lives, our all into your care and service, for the sake of the gospel. Amen.

Hymn HWB #259 When I survey the wondrous cross

Anointing the Feet of Jesus

Scripture John 12:1-8

Song “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news”
by Bryan Moyer Suderman

Mary's Monologue (below)

Hymn HWB #522 My Jesus, I love thee

Don't Wash my Feet

Scripture John 13:1-11

Song “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news”

Peter's Monologue (below)

Hymn HWB #439 I want Jesus to walk with me

Jesus Washes our Feet

Scripture John 13:12-20

Hymn HWB #449 Jesus took a towel

Footwashing/Handwashing

Dirty feet. Clay feet. Awkward feet. Feet that have walked many a mile... Beautiful feet! We bring our very feet into the act of footwashing. We become the hands of Christ to each other as we wash hands. Footwashing, handwashing, is a vulnerable, extravagant, counter-cultural act. We believe that Jesus Christ calls us to serve one another in love just as he chose the role of a servant by washing the disciples' feet.

This morning you are invited to participate in this symbolic action, this embodiment of our faith. You are invited to participate in either footwashing or handwashing, as you feel comfortable. Some of us have participated many times in this kind of a worship ritual. For others, this may be a new experience and I encourage you to enter with openness to what may feel both strange but also powerful in its enactment of Christ's gift of love.

May the Holy Spirit create in us the mind that was in Christ Jesus, to enable us to love and live as he did. May we count our feet as beautiful – beautiful feet that bring good news to the world.

Let us pray: God who calls feet beautiful, we recognize our need for cleansing and renewal. Wash us and make us one with the body of Christ. Help us to let go of pride and power and offer ourselves in humble service. May we come to know the liberating peace of being a servant. Through Jesus Christ, who humbled himself, we pray. Amen.

Come, let's gather around the basin and the towel.

Solo How beautiful are the feet George Frederick Handel

Following in the Footsteps of Jesus

Scripture Matthew 26:36-46

Song "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news"

Disciple's Monologue (below)

Hymn STS #80 Jesus walked this lonesome valley

Carrying the Cross of Jesus

Scripture Luke 23:13-28

Song "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news"

Simon of Cyrene's Monologue (below)

Hymn HBW #240 Go to dark Gethsemane

Remembering the Broken Body

Scripture Luke 23:44-49

Quartet Ave Verum Corpus William Byrd

Communion

Our feet have brought us to the foot of the cross. We cannot go any further. We cannot take another step by ourselves. And yet in this cross we find Jesus. It is Jesus who takes on the weight of the world. It is Jesus who commits himself fully to God and the way of the cross. It is Jesus who loses life, only to gain it. It is Jesus who invites us to keep following, to keep putting foot in front of foot, even when we don't know where that might take us. It is Jesus who is there with us, offering grace and forgiveness and new life over and over again. And it is Jesus who invites us to this communion table, to renew again our commitment to walking in his paths, and to receive the grace and strength to keep walking. Thanks be to God!

This morning we will walk forward to receive communion, as a sign of our desire to follow Jesus and to use our feet to the glory of God.

Please join me in prayer. O God of wondrous love, made known in the cross of Christ: our feet have led us to enter once more into the story of your passion and death. Your body, bruised and broken, you now offer to us in a meal that binds and transforms. Fill us with gratitude and humility, we pray, for the sacrifice you have made on our behalf. Thank you for this feast of love, full of mystery and yet full of tangible gifts – the gifts of your body in bread and cup, the gifts of your body in this community of cross-bearing disciples. Fill us with your Spirit and give us courage. Help us walk in your ways. We remember now your life, death, and resurrection. Amen.

Hymn HWB #252 O sacred Head, now wounded (vv. 1, 3, 4)

Benediction

So how can our world call on one in whom they have not believed or heard of without someone to proclaim him? They will know us by our feet, by our walking, by our living, by watching what it means to bring and proclaim the good news of Jesus. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! Go, walking into the darkness of this day, knowing that your feet will bring you to Easter. Amen.

Postlude

Mary's Monologue

(Each character is barefoot. Come to the stage and in some way acknowledge the feet sculpture, before saying the following common phrase used by each monologue character)

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

I'm not sure what came over me that night. We were at my brother's house – a dinner party really. For Jesus. A celebration, I guess, that we were family, that Lazarus was alive, that Jesus was still alive. We had heard the rumours, the threats. The tension was all around. But in that moment we were all together and we were safe.

I had sat at the feet of Jesus many times. Listened, learned, loved. It was the one thing I could hold on to. That made sense in this crazy world. That gave me an anchor, a solid footing.

I had also seen the dead feet of my brother. Cold and lifeless. What a helpless feeling. I could not let that happen to Jesus. I had to protect him, look after him, shelter him, save him from harm. I did the one thing that sprang to my head, no – my heart really, almost unbeckoned, almost without any control myself.

It was the feet. I poured perfume all over them. Soaked them. Wiped them. Dried them with my own hair. Pure nard. Pure Love. And the tears. They were everywhere. Weeping for Jesus, for Lazarus, for Martha, for what was to come; weeping for our world. Maybe the perfume could cover up and wipe out the smell of death.

The words of Judas hurt – his concern with money, his false concern for the poor, but it was Jesus that brought back the tears – 'Leave her alone. She bought the perfume for the day of my burial.' How I long to hold on and protect those feet from where they will need to tread.

Peter's Monologue

(Each character is barefoot. Come to the stage and in some way acknowledge the feet sculpture, before saying the following common phrase used by each monologue character)

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

Clay feet! That's what I have. I always seem to put my whole foot in my mouth! But that's what it's like being around Jesus. He gets a foothold with you, and it keeps throwing you off balance.

I couldn't believe it when he was the one who got up from the table, took off his outer robe and tied a towel around himself. That's what servants do. He didn't stop there either. He poured water into a basin and started washing our dirty feet and drying them with the towel. That's just wrong. He is the rabbi, the leader, the one due respect and honour. 'You will never wash my feet!' ... His response stunned me. 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' 'Then not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' I still didn't get it.

My feet had got me in trouble before with Jesus. On a windy day back on the Sea of Galilee, when we had seen him, ghost-like, walking towards our boat, right on the water. I got out of the boat and starting walking too. What an amazing 'feat' that was. For a moment, for that instant when trust outweighed doubt. But then I looked down at my feet and got that sinking feeling. My whole body got wet that day too.

I can never pin-point Jesus. He keeps turning thing upside down. Doubt-faith, master-servant, giving-receiving, blessing-being blessed, washing-being washed, head-feet.

But maybe that's the whole point. We all need things turned upside down. We all have clay feet, we all put our feet in our mouths, we all mis-step, we all get our feet dirty. That's the very kind of feet Jesus came to wash.

Disciple's Monologue

(Each character is barefoot. Come to the stage and in some way acknowledge the feet sculpture, before saying the following common phrase used by each monologue character)

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

It seemed so easy at the time – following Jesus. Just a simple call - “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” We left immediately and just starting walking, following, putting one foot in front of the next. We are fishermen after all, used to getting our feet wet and muddy – getting right into the dirt of our world. There was a sense of purpose and new identity – a vision for the Kingdom. We were following in the footsteps of Jesus.

We walked everywhere. Boy did we walk. The Galilee, Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem. Dusty paths, fields, by the sea, towns, villages, streets. If we were not welcomed, Jesus simply said to shake off the dust from our feet and keep going. For three years, one step at a time – ever deeper and further down that path.

Many days my feet were tired, but nothing like today, in this Garden. This is a different kind of tiredness. More like emotional exhaustion, filled with unanswered questions. What's going to happen next? Is this it for Jesus? For us? Does the path end here? Betrayal, denial, danger, death. It's all too real.

How can Jesus simply stop and sit and pray? ‘If it is possible, let this cup pass’, ‘not my will but thy will’, ‘Stay awake - the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.’ I'm so tired. Even my feet are falling asleep. I don't know if I can follow any further, take another step.

Simon of Cyrene's Monologue

(Each character is barefoot. Come to the stage and in some way acknowledge the feet sculpture, before saying the following common phrase used by each monologue character)

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

My feet had brought me to the wrong place at the wrong time... Or, just maybe, it was the right place and the right time?

The sentencing had just happened. Herod, Pilate, the crowds – all with the verdict 'Crucify him!' All washing their hands of him. It was as they led him away that they grabbed me, an innocent bystander. I wanted to run, but it was too late. Before I knew it I was carrying the instrument of death on **my** shoulders. Talk about walking a mile in someone else's shoes. I felt every painful step.

The cross was heavy, weighty, cumbersome. The weight of the world. Hadn't Jesus once said 'If you want to follow in my footsteps, deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me. Those who save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.' I felt that, lived that, in my body, in my feet, as I walked.

We walked slowly that day – a big crowd. All I could hear was the wailing – women weeping and crying, the weight of this day expressed out loud. It was strange. Jesus kept deflecting the attention and the care away from himself – towards others. 'Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.' 'Forgive them; for they know not what they are doing.' He remained silent as others mocked 'save yourself.'

Maybe life is not about ourselves, but about others. Denying self. Taking up the cross. Losing life to gain life. Maybe none of us can be bystanders. None of us can wash our hands of Jesus. Maybe we all need to take that step and carry that weighty cross.