

Maundy Thursday
2nd April 2026
Sermon

I am a runner. Not a very fast one, but a reasonably consistent one, and I certainly try hard. One thing I have to confess about my running habit is that it makes my feet ... well ... not very nice. Perhaps there are runners who manage to also have lovely feet, but I am not one of them. I'll spare you the details, but you probably get the picture.

And you can probably also understand that over the years this has made Maundy Thursday slightly challenging. Before I had the privilege of being the person washing the feet, I had a number of those awkward conversations in which someone asked if I would be prepared to offer a foot for washing and I tried to find a good reason why it wasn't possible.

In my experience, I'm not the only person who has issues with having their feet washed. Many of us bid a hasty retreat when it's the time that people are being asked to volunteer their feet.

If any of that resonates for you, it may reassure you to know that this is in fact part of the point. We are supposed to recognise the discomfort of what Jesus was doing on that night.

I love Peter because so often he responds in exactly the way that I want to respond. We can hear his horror as Jesus gently gets up, ties a towel around his waist, pours water into a basin, and begins to wash the disciples' feet. He is quite simply horrified.

Part of the importance of this evening is recognising that his response is completely normal. Through his calm and gentle actions, Jesus is entirely dignified. And yet within our societal expectations, these actions are anything but. If we were at dinner with the King, we would not expect him even to serve the vegetables, let alone to kneel and wash our feet. Through his actions, Jesus was overturning people's expectations, and encouraging them to think.

And, most importantly, he was seeking to teach them about the kind of community that his followers might look like.

During the Last Supper, Jesus sought to show his disciples two important things. First, that they needed to have their feet washed. This was not literal – Jesus made that very clear. But just think for a moment about the vulnerability of allowing someone to wash our feet. And then take the analogy a little wider. I wonder, how easy do you find it to ask for help? To acknowledge that you need something from someone else.

In truth, acknowledging our own vulnerability requires trust. We have good reason to find it difficult – within human nature is the unfortunate truth that sometimes our trust can be misplaced. Nevertheless, Jesus seeks to show his disciples that communities of his followers will be the kinds of communities in which our vulnerability can be shown safely.

And of course the second thing that Jesus shows is that we need to be prepared to serve. To be the one who gets down on our knees and washes someone else's feet. If that's what Jesus did for his disciples, it's what we must be prepared to do, too.

It may be that you find one of those things more difficult than the other. That you are good at helping out and supporting others, but find it harder to ask for help yourself. Or that you have had to ask for help and find it hard to believe that you have anything to offer yourself.

The call this evening is to start from where we are, and journey with Jesus. As a start, there is one place that it is always safe to acknowledge our own vulnerability, and that is in our prayers. We can always trust God to accept us as we are. In truth, God already knows anyway, but it can be such a relief to actually admit that we are struggling and ask for help.

Being a community of trust and support is something that we are always practising. In this Ministry Area, I join you part way along that journey. You already know one another and know who you speak to most often.

In the days and weeks to come, I look forward to building relationships too. To getting to know each of you better. To listening carefully to your hopes and fears; your dreams and aspirations; your hurts and anxieties. To sharing my own story, too.

The journey of the communities in this Ministry Area will always be ongoing as people come and go, and our lives evolve in ways that we can rarely predict.

The call on us this Maundy Thursday is to continue to grow as the kind of communities that Jesus calls us to be. Communities where trust is always being developed; where vulnerability can be possible; where we serve one another.

It is a journey that I am looking forward to being part of as we grow together, learning from one another, and hopefully having a bit of fun along the way.

Amen