

“Your Turn”

by Greg Smith-Young (Elora-Bethany Pastoral Charge)
Third in a Lent series about Jesus’ Footwashing

John 13.1-20

March 29, 2020

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Jesus was getting them ready for what was coming next. Maybe he is getting us ready too.

His work, his mission continues. By his Spirit, he is alive and active in our world. As his Spirit fills us — us together as Jesus Church around the world, and each of us where we are — as his Spirit fills us, his work and his mission continue through us.

So, we wash feet. Other people’s feet.

Even in pandemic-time, while social-distancing — maybe especially in this time of fear and isolation, of sickness and suffering — Jesus calls us and uses us to wash people’s feet.

It’s your turn.

II

Look at it this way. Jesus gives us a pattern. Now it’s our turn to stitch it.¹

Judy McMullan, from our Elora congregation, belongs to the Canadian Embroiderers’ Guild. So I asked Judy how embroiderers work. Most often, they begin with a pattern. The pattern guides the artist as they stitch the various colours and textures of thread that make the finished piece.

Here is a pattern for a Tudor-style rose. It’s put on the cloth, and stitching begins. Red thread, green, then gold. Different stitches and techniques. Then, the finished, beautiful piece.²

Remember, it begins with the pattern.

Jesus gives us our pattern. He shows us how to be human.

God makes us in God’s image, and God shapes us to act God’s way. No, we cannot do what God does. We are not God! Still, Jesus shows us what God’s love-in-action is like. You are made to live that love-in-action like Jesus.

¹ The word Jesus uses in verse 15 is *hupodeigma*. In the ancient world, this could mean “a picture showing how something was to be done, a tracing that someone else would follow, filling in the details.” N. T. Wright, *John for Everyone, Part 2* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 47.

² I showed images created by Mary Corbet on her website, Needle ‘n Thread. See www.needlenthread.com/2011/07/goldwork-silk-tudor-style-rose-tutorials-index.html

Jesus, with all his power and his glory, what does he do? He kneels. He serves. He touches us in our griminess, stinkiness, at our roughest and most tender. And he washes us clean.

Now it's your turn. In your day-to-day life, and your disrupted life these days, you stitch your colours and textures that follow Jesus' pattern.

III

See, Jesus sends you.

He says, "*No servant (or slave) is greater than her or his master.*" Everyone knew that. Jesus is our Master. He entered into the humbleness of service. And so do we. Even the most humble, the most cruddy task is made noble by Jesus. We have no business saying, "That's below me. That's beneath me." No servant is greater than their master.

Then Jesus says, "*No one who is sent is greater than the one who sent them.*" A pattern is at work here. Jesus talks about God his Father sending him, the Son. Then he sends us. We are his sent people. He brings us into his mission, his purpose.

We have been beneficiaries of what Jesus has done for us. We beneficiaries then become benefactors for others. Jesus pours himself into us, not so we can be containers, holding him in, but conduits, flowing what Jesus has done for others.³

You are sent to wash people's feet. Serve them, at their grimeiest, stinkiest, at their roughest and most tender. Wash each other. Wash those outside the Jesus-community.⁴

It's your turn.

IV

But we can't touch each other, not right now.

Touch is important. But that was never really the point of what Jesus was saying. Footwashing is a dramatic symbol of the sort of love-in-action things we can do because Jesus sends us.

Alexis belongs to our church-community. She is six. These days, she is painting pictures. She then gives them to her neighbours, to cheer them. Alexis is using her God-given-gifts and she is being moved by her Jesus-shaped, footwashing love, to serve.

Friday, I was part of a meeting convened by the Centre Wellington Community Foundation. First, let me say that a number of those involved are part of our Elora-Bethany

³ Michael J. Gorman, Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 88.

⁴ Gorman shows that Jesus' footwashing and love commands are directed both to inner-community service and extra-community service. See Gorman, 93.

congregations. They are not representing us there. Still, they are using their God-given-gifts, and are being moved by their Jesus-shaped, foot-washing love, to serve.

The meeting was to hear how front-line, people-helping organizations in our communities are being affected by this massive disruption we are experiencing. How are the needs of those they are serving changing? What is happening to these organizations' resources: their money, their volunteers, their staff? What might lie ahead? How can we help?

We are disrupted. Many are suffering. Some gravely. Some fatally. Such need.

This disruption is doing something else too. It is throwing us out of our patterns. Things that used to consume our time and energy, we have to do very differently. Or, not at all.

So think about is: How is this disruption creating new ways for you to serve? Think about it. Let's talk about it. Especially pray about it.

Jesus is sending us, now as much as ever. What gifts is he giving you? How is his Jesus-shaped, foot-washing love moving you?

It's your turn.

V

It's your turn, because Jesus lives in you. You belong to him. You share in him. Jesus shares himself with you. He loves you. His love for you is love-in-action, God-shaped love. He kneels before you, and washes your feet. All your griminess, all your messiness, anything about you that smells and stinks. None of it will repel him, so great is his love for you. He cleanses you. He forgives you. He feeds you and heals you. Dies for you, and raises you up.

And he sends you, to share that love: that kneeling, footwashing love-in-action. His for you.

Now, it's your turn.