

If You Hear Nothing Else, Then Hear This:

You can make a fool of yourself.
You can bet on the wrong thing,
lose it all, unravel people's trust.
You can laugh at a funeral,
curse in a church, say the wrong thing
at the wrong time, *every time*.
You can lose yourself in a bottle,
a relationship, a false sense of security.
You can uncover prejudice
and wrestle with the shame of it all.
You can withhold an apology,
blame it on someone else,
tell yourself it's not your fault.
You can trade in love
for a bag of coins.
And even then,
even still,
even now,
Jesus will love you enough to
wash your feet.
If you hear nothing else in the gospel,
hear this.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah Speed

Read John 13:1-35

Commentary | Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail

He Loved Them to the End

“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (John 13:1). Jesus’ mercy is not just unmerited—it is *scandalous*. I would much rather reflect on how Jesus is with us in times of trial. How Jesus walks with us when we are in the valley of the shadow of death. It’s not that I relish being in said valley of the shadow of death. It’s that, when I am grieving, or struggling, or clearly a victim, the mercy of Jesus feels. . . soothing. But Jesus’ mercy is not just confined to clean, easily identifiable victims. Jesus steps right into the traumatic muck of betrayal, and sin, and corruption, and says: *Even here, at the end, I love you.*

Judas should have been cancelled.

Instead, Jesus says clearly: “One of you will betray me” (John 13:21). As Judas knows he is the traitor, Jesus kneels at Judas’s feet and washes them clean.

There is some theater to this, of course; it calls to mind the work done by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and the students who participated in sit-ins at Woolworth’s during the US Civil Rights Movement of the 1950’s and 60’s. They would strategically select places known to be the worst for racist violence, invite the public eye to watch, and wait for the absurdity of this evil to play out—so that all could see it for its absurdity and evil. I have no doubt God is the original architect of this kind of Theatre of the Oppressed.²⁵

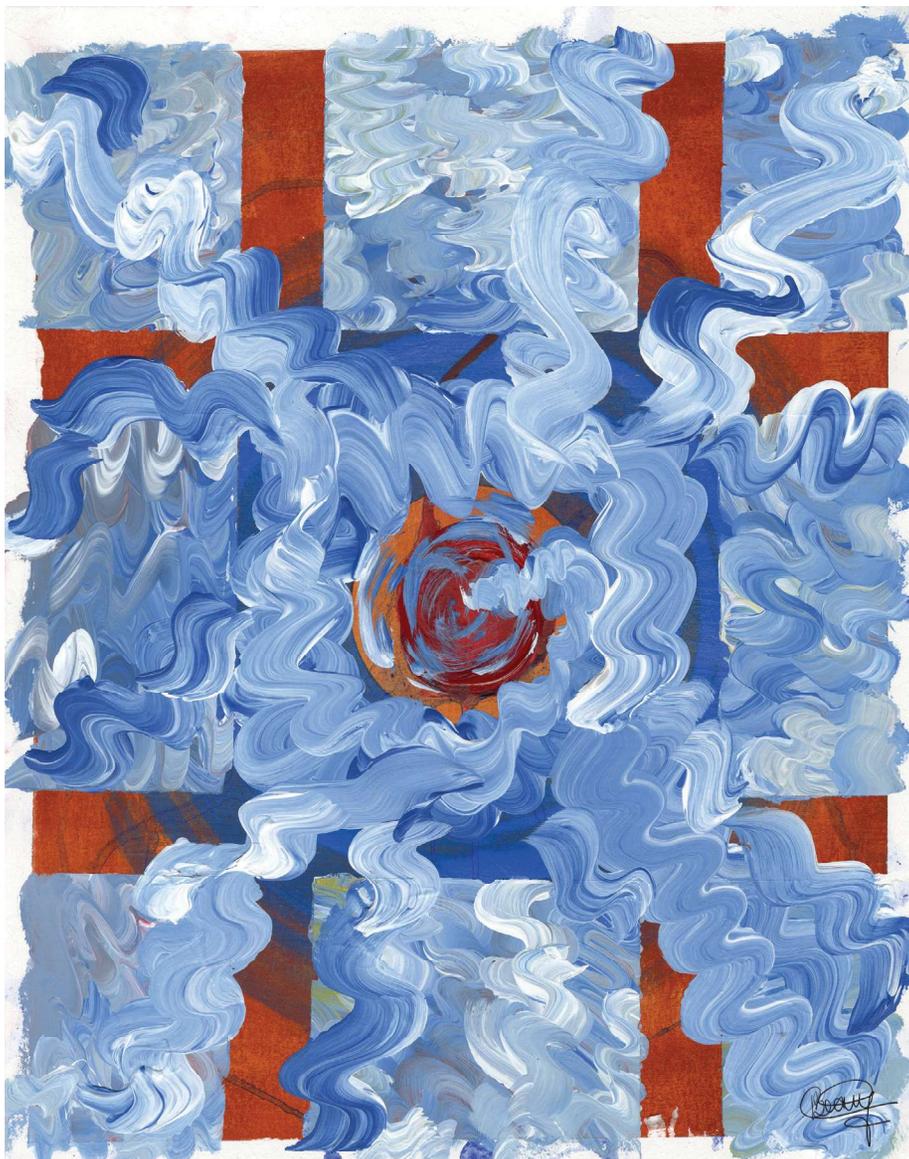
Jesus is not just performing; he is extending genuine mercy. All confrontational nonviolence done in Jesus’ name invites the oppressor to be human again, not through dehumanizing power, but through the humility of our interdependence on each other. It is both unsurprising and devastating that, after his feet have been washed, Judas still runs to betray his Lord—just as it remains unsurprising and devastating when our enemies and oppressors do the same. But Jesus—truly human, and truly God—knew this would happen.

And he washes Judas’s feet, anyway.

Reflect

Imagine you are Judas; how does it feel to have your feet washed?

²⁵ Theatre of the Oppressed uses theater as a tool for social and political activism. Originally created by Brazilian theater director and activist Augusto Boal, it is a participatory art form intended to inspire transformation.



Flow | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell
11"x14" Acrylic on paper

Maundy Thursday the good news is... even Judas gets his feet washed

Read John 13:1-35

Artist Statement | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell

The last time I washed another person's feet was ten years ago while interning at First United Methodist Church of Miami. For more than thirty years, First Church has hosted the Breakfast Club—a ministry of shared meals, fellowship, and worship with the unhoused community in downtown Miami. One of its most meaningful traditions is the Breakfast Club's annual foot washing event, a practice that has become a radical act of faith and service. It has drawn local attention, not for its novelty but for its reciprocity—modeling a kind of fellowship that resists the tendency to “other” those who express need.

Knowing what would come next, I often wondered what it must have been like for the disciples to watch Jesus wash Judas's feet. None of us is too great or too small to receive grace. Even the water—swirling with dust and surrender—becomes a witness to transformation.

To wash one another's feet—even those whom society deems “untouchable”—is an act of profound grace. There is deep vulnerability and intimacy in holding someone's feet in your hands, and in allowing another to hold yours. The practice of foot washing remains, for me, one of the most meaningful expressions of Christian faith I have ever participated in.

Look

What do the red lines in the image represent to you? How do you feel seeing the water flow over them?