

Compass Bearing #8

Devotions to Navigate the Coronavirus Pandemic

“Dirty Feet”

Thursday, April 9, 2020

When I was a kid, I never wore shoes. When I played basketball on the blacktop driveway, no shoes needed. When I worked in the garden, the soil squeezed up between my toes. When I helped Dad work on cars in the back garage, barefoot was fine. When I played baseball in the backyard, I was shoeless Joe Jackson. Needless to say, I had dirty feet most of the time.

And here’s something I could never figure out. Mom always expected me to clean my feet before I came back in the house. But she never volunteered to wash my feet for me. Nor did Dad. And definitely not my brothers. I had to do the dirty work of cleaning my feet myself.

Today is Maundy Thursday. It is the day that we honor the last day of freedom in Jesus’ life. Late that night he would be arrested, and by 9:00 the next morning he was hanging on the cross. Jesus knew this was coming, as he predicted it on at least three different occasions. So what did he do with his last act of freedom? He washed his disciples’ feet.

³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:3-5)

Now these disciples had not just come from the podiatrist. They had not just stepped out of the shower. And they were not wearing Nike Air Zoom Pegasus 36 Trail Running shoes. More like Chaco Z/2 Classic sandals, worn for wading through streams, walking around desert lands, trekking across open fields covered with sheep dung, and splashing through the filthy city streets in the day before modern sanitation. Those are the feet Jesus washed.

But Jesus wasn’t done.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. ¹³ “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. (John 13:12-17)

The first act of authentic discipleship is humble servanthood.

How is Jesus’ challenge to “wash one another’s feet” a call to action in your life?