

Welcome to our series – *Be of the Same Mind as Christ*.

Each week we will read and listen to the text from Paul's letter to the Philippians. We will pair it with another text and reflect on one notion from the Philippians hymn. This week that notion is what it means that Jesus Christ emptied and humbled himself. The mural today/this evening connects the Christ who removes concern for personal status in his dealings with us to the story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples.

In the gospel of John the disciples identify Jesus most often as Rabbi or Teacher. In moments of revelation they say that he is the Messiah, the King of Israel, and the Holy One of God. All of these titles lead us to imagine a person of authority, as one that we are to look up to. But in our story, the one from whom we look to bends low and take the position of one who serves us.

In the story of John's gospel Jesus acts as a type of servant that is not important enough to even have a name. An everyday task becomes an occasion for viewing Jesus in a radically new way.

In Jesus' day people traveled from one place to another on foot. If you were invited to someone's home, you traveled on a dirty road. Your host would likely greet you at the door with a towel and a basin of water so you could wash your feet. This was a usual practice, that you would wash your own feet.

Some households would have a slave, a person who was bound to an owner and had to do what the owner commanded. This person was not free but bound by a transaction to do the bidding of his or her master. Some households had a slave wash the feet of their guests. But never would a free person wash the feet of another free person. Never would a person of equal status wash the feet of another person.

What Jesus does is beyond comprehension! He whom the disciples called "Lord" and "King of Israel" and "the Holy One of God," lowered himself intentionally, and washed the feet of all his disciples, even the one who would betray him.

I do not know what word to use to describe how they might have felt but it must have been deeper than embarrassment. To allow Jesus to do what they could do for themselves was shocking. They could wash their own feet! But what they could not imagine doing until Jesus first did it for them was to fully care for the life of their neighbor.

A few years ago Pope Francis went to a prison to wash the feet of those incarcerated no matter their religion. What would happen to us and to the world around us if we went out and washed the feet of the homeless in Eau Claire, or the feet of those in prison, or those who are undocumented, or those who identity as LGBTQIA+, or those who stand in any need of community?

Jesus knew it would take some time for Peter and all the disciples to embody this kind of service and love for another. He said, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

We are to look to Christ and see how he gave himself so entirely over to the training of those he called. He is a true mentor. Even as He reminded them, "servants are not greater than their master," he washed their feet. It has been called a sacramental act—for it enacted God's grace that transcends a simple deed—and a mysterious one. By this simple act Jesus demonstrated God's love for them, God's total care for their whole person, and he called them to do the same for others, our neighbors, the world.