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This is the quintessential Jesus text if I've ever heard one. You know that saying about country songs? It's not a country song if it doesn't involve pickup trucks, your mama, and a good meal after a hard day of work in your boots. Well here, it's not a Jesus text if it doesn't include Jesus doing something radical, includes everyone, and points us toward loving one another.

We read this text each Holy Week on Maundy Thursday because it sets the stage for the rest of the week. Jesus sets up the idea here that everything that he does in next couple of days are an extension of the love he shows here.

After eating, Jesus gets up and prepares everything he needs to wash the feet of his disciples. And here's what gets me every time—chapter 13 verse 2 says, “The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, he got up to wash their feet.

He did what he did knowing full well what was coming next. He knew that Judas would sell him out for a couple of pieces of silver, he knew that Peter would deny him, he knew he would be nailed to cross and die, while they looked on. Can you imagine? And then, even knowing that—he got down and served them. The first verse of this chapter says he loved them to the end—and washing their feet is an exhibit a of that proof.

Washing the feet of people is not a pleasant experience. And this is in modern day—this couldn't be anywhere near how it was for Jesus that night. The act of foot washing in the ancient world was practical but also a symbol. It not only showed humility, but for Jesus, most importantly, it showed hospitality.

The scene would have looked like this: the disciples would have been dear friends that would have traveled through long and dusty walks, feet dry with dust and exhausted. They would recline at the table to eat, so foot washing was an essential step in inviting others to the community feast. The job was a dirty one usually reserved for lowly servants, but it was extremely important. To wash someone's feet was to recognize them as a welcome guest, to remove any barriers that might keep them from the table.

This gets to the very heart of the ministry of Jesus: removing any barriers that might keep someone from being in full relationship with God. John makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is the great connector between us and God. And Jesus' words to the disciples call for them to follow in his role model and being the great connector between the people of the world and God after Jesus leaves.

Jesus washes away any barriers we have when he comes to our feet with his basin. What is he washing away from your feet? With the warmth of the water, shame, fear, any feelings of inadequacy are washed from your soul. With the wipe of his towel, those voices that say that you are not good enough are wiped clean from your heart. Jesus comes right up to you and gets rid of all of those barriers that keep you from being in full relationship with God. If I didn't say yours, what were the things that fell off when Jesus washed you clean?

Then, Jesus, the greatest educator of them all, tells them to go and do as he has done. Go and love your neighbor the way that he has shown love to us—a kind of love that knows all the ways that we are rebellious and messy and all the ways we will screw up—and loves us anyway. Loves us to the end.

This was one of Jesus' final teachings—loving us and then telling us to go and do. And while we're serving our people, let us be mindful of who we consider "our" people to be. May we all be empowered as the ritual of the water and the towel reminds us of what happens in our baptism, where we are placed in unity with God and tied to Jesus, and his sense of identity and mission. May our love be the water that washes others barriers away so that they can be in unity with God, too.

And while we wash the barriers away, let us be challenged to take up the tools of hospitality ourselves. May our every action invite others into a community of mutual love and call them into joining in on the work that God is already doing in the world. This week, as Jesus death cleans our souls from sin and barriers, let's not get through with our work until we ask ourselves these questions: Who is invited to our tables? And who is currently being kept away and what is keeping them away?

In a time of social distancing, we physically can't wash each other's feet. That doesn't mean that we're off the hook. So, how can we still tangibly reach out to wipe away the

barriers that keep others from God? Jesus used a washcloth, water, and humility to show love to his disciples, whether we would deem them worthy of that love or not—what are your tools of hospitality? What are Westminster's tools? How can we spend this Holy Week loving in the way Jesus loved—to the very end?