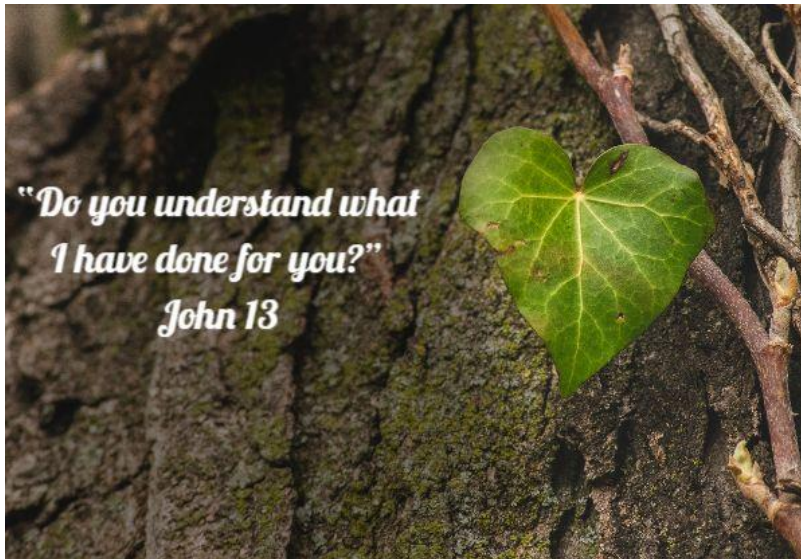


HEARTBEATS STAYING CONNECTED 4-21-2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

One of the most challenging questions that Jesus asks is the one He places before His followers after washing their feet in John 13. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” It is a powerful question and it obviously goes well-beyond that moment, though the twelve disciples did not realize it at the time.

When an honored guest arrived at a one’s home, it was customary to have the guest’s feet washed. But it was not a particularly nice job. After all, because people mostly walked places, their feet would be dusty and dirty, perhaps caked with mud. There might even be animal dung on their feet. It wasn’t a nice task to have to do, so it was assigned to the person of lowest position in the household—a servant or a slave. It was considered one of the lowest chores one might have to perform. So, when Jesus begins to wash their feet, the disciples are shocked. He is their teacher, their master, their rabbi. He is the most important person in their group—the head of their household, if you will. Yet He takes the lowliest task and performs it as though they were the honored guests.

No doubt, when He asked them if they understood what He had done, on one level, they could say, “Yes.” But they probably couldn’t say what this meant. They likely didn’t know why He had done this. So, He explains to them: “You call Me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you.” Jesus was saying

that there was nothing that was beyond the kind of servanthood to which He called them. There was no task that was too menial for them to do.

In part, though, He was telling also them that there should be no division among them. There should be no more important and less important with in their group. It's ironic that the Bible always lists the apostles with Peter first, and then James and John, and then the rest from most recognizable, most significant down to the least. Of course, there has to be an order for naming them, but this sort of flies in the face of what Jesus was demonstrating.

As I said, the question goes far beyond what happened in that room that evening. They couldn't understand it all until after the cross and the resurrection. I wonder how often that question crossed their minds after that Easter Sunday: "Do you understand what I have done for you?" And, as I have previously said, it is a question for us, too. Do we understand what Jesus has done for us? Is it more than just a lesson we have heard in church? Recognizing, truly admitting the sin in our lives, the multiple times each day that we fail to live as God expects us to live, imagine trying to make up for that. Think about what life would be like if we had to struggle each day to give "payment" for everything we have done that falls short of what God wants from us. And that's just for the things we know we have or have not done. What about the things we do or fail to do unawares? We don't even know the price. How will we ever get right with God again? But then Jesus takes all those failings—those sins—and carries them with Him to the cross, and frees us from the guilt of letting down God and the shame of our failure. This is what the cross is all about. This is what our future is all about. This is what our lives are all about now because of Jesus. "Do you understand what I have done for you?"

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Jeffrey