

Jesus washes Peter's feet – John 12:1-20

Peter looked at his feet in dismay – he had been trailing around Jerusalem all day running errands in preparation for the Passover meal, and they were hot and there was dirt and all sorts stuck to the sweat between his toes. He scrunched his toes up as if to hide them under the leather band of his sandals, and looked up at Jesus. 'No' he said again, this time more quietly. 'It's not right, you're my friend not a servant. You're the Son of God, you're...' he stumbled over his words as he tried to explain the enormity of who Jesus was and became silent as he watched that smile that Jesus had that made him feel like he was the only person on earth spread across his face.

'Dear Peter' Jesus said, pouring clean water into the bowl he had just used to wash John's feet. 'I know you don't understand this now, but you will one day'. Peter scrunched his toes up further and shook his head 'No, you will never wash my feet'. He watched as different emotions scuttled across Jesus' face settling into disappointment. 'Peter' Jesus said gently, 'unless I wash you, you don't really belong to me'.

Peter's toes uncurled with a start and he kicked off his shoes ' Well in that case Lord, wash my hands and head as well!' Jesus laughed as he swerved the bowl out of the way of a flying sandal and knelt at Peter's feet. 'Someone who has had a bath only needs to have their feet washed when their body is clean' he said as he took one of Peter's feet in his hands and started to pour the warm water over it. Peter could feel the sweat and grime dropping off his feet with the water. He watch the top of Jesus' head as he concentrated on his work, and remembered all the times he had stood behind Jesus as he spoke to crowds or healed people who were not well.

He remembered watching that head dozing in the sun in the boat, or thrown back in laughter at something funny. Jesus was so amazing, it was sometimes hard not to

stare, and there had been a couple of times when Jesus had caught him looking in wonder with his mouth slightly open, and had crinkled his eyes at him in amusement. Those eyes. It was as if they held all the oceans of the world and at the same time they knew you more completely than you knew yourself. They held such power like towering mountains and yet were so full of love you felt like you were wrapped in a cloud...

Jesus swapped feet and Peter was pulled back into the room. He realised that the room was very quiet, the other disciples just sitting and waiting, their feet already washed by Jesus. The only noise was the trickling of the water back into the bowl. Peter swallowed hard fighting back the tears. Something was going on here, that he didn't understand - he hoped Jesus was right and he would soon - but right now the peace, the connection, the love in the room was tangible and it was all he could do to stop himself from grabbing Jesus in a big bear hug. Jesus sat up, drying his hands, his eyes twinkling at Peter as they always did when Peter was having these kind of thoughts. He picked up the bowl and moved away from Peter as he put his robe back on and sat down again in his place at the meal. 'You call me teacher' said Jesus to all of them 'and rightly so, because that is what I am. Today, I have set you an example. As your Lord and Teacher I have shown you how to treat each other. As I have done this humble and sometimes horrible job' - he winked at Andrew who was renowned for having smelly feet - 'so must you do this for each other. As you are called to spread the good news of God's love that I have shared with you as your master, so must you also do as your master has done and serve those around you.'

Peter wriggled his clean toes. He thought he was beginning to understand. My goodness Jesus was full of surprises. You never knew what was going to happen next!