

CORNS, CALLUSES, AND BUNIONS

Read Exodus 3:1-5 again.

Take your shoes off, you are on holy ground – ewe.

For some reason, as a society, we really don't like feet. A pastor friend of mine told me that when she was in high school, she had to write a poem about the ugliest part of her body – so she chose her feet.

But in both of our scripture readings today, they reference feet.

It is funny that we think this way about feet, because we haven't always. In the Old Testament they said, "How beautiful are the feet."

So let's get in the right frame of mind for today's message. If you are able to, I invite you to take off a shoe. No, I am not losing my mind, I would like those of you who aren't 100% objected to it, and those who can easily enough remove a shoe to take one off. You can keep your socks on.

If you can't or really, really don't want to, you can share your neighbor's shoe.

The term, "Beautiful are the feet" came from the days when the armies would be out at war and because there wasn't CNN, someone would have to run back to the village or wherever the families were, to give word about how the battle was going.

Sometimes the word was good news, sometimes the word wasn't such good news. But at least the families knew.

For many, it is harder not knowing.

In those days they didn't have cars either – so everywhere they went was on foot. They didn't have phones, so the only way they could talk with others was to walk over to them.

So let's look at our shoes. Some of you might be wearing work shoes, others maybe tennis shoes, maybe some high heels or penny loafers.

No matter what kind of shoe you are looking at it has the same purpose: Protect our feet as we go from point A to point B.

Now let's look a little deeper at our shoes. As we have worn these shoes, who have we spoken to? Who have we met for the first time while wearing them? What is the happiest thing that has happened to us while wearing these shoes? What is the saddest?

For some of us, we have had our shoes for years. Possibly wearing them to weddings, funerals, anniversary parties. Others of us haven't had our shoes that long and haven't done much but come to church in them.

We might think our toes are ugly or our feet smell – so we don't talk about them much.

But our shoes take us places. We meet new people while we wear them. New people in the church, in the grocery stores, wherever we go. And we also see our friends and community while we wear them.

Then the laces help the shoe hug our feet, and our feet feel safe and secure because of them.

You can put your shoe back on.

Think back to Jesus' day. They walked around in sandals all of the time. They were living in Israel – where they weren't walking through grass barefooted!

So their feet were dirty – filthy! Probably didn't smell the greatest either.

So it was a custom that when you entered someone's home, and you were going to stay for dinner, that a servant, typically the lowest servant, would come around and wash your feet.

But in our Gospel reading today, it wasn't a servant, it was Mary. Jesus loved this family, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. So Mary wasn't a servant by any means – but a sister to Martha and Lazarus.

So why did she do what is reserved for a lowly servant?

And then we learn that she used some really expensive perfume to anoint him with.

Of course Judas Iscariot chastises her for using it saying that they could have sold it off. It was worth about a year's wages. Think of all the poor that money could have fed. (And of course a little off the top for Judas' retirement fund.)

Whenever I read that passage, I always think to myself, well, wasn't Judas right? I mean, Jesus tells us to take care of the poor so why would he need a pound of perfume? You thought smelly feet were bad, how about a whole pound of perfume in a small house?

Jesus says something strange here – “You will always have the poor, but you do not always have me.” Now he was talking about himself in the physical sense, not the spiritual sense.

But still I find that interesting. Here is what is neat about it. He chastised Judas because he didn't want Judas to chastise Mary for doing what was right. And what she was doing that was right, she was humbling herself and worshiping the Messiah, the Christ. She understood that her time with him was about over.

She knew it. She knew who he was. Really, before any of the “main disciples” fully understood, she got it. She was able to open herself up and fully understand just who he was – and nothing could stand in her way.

But most of the others didn't get it. See Judas was still waiting on Jesus to rally the troops and be a great military leader. He had his own idea of what the Messiah would do. Because of his own arrogance, he couldn't see Jesus for who he really was, like Mary was able to do.

But we all have obstacles in our lives that can prevent us from getting closer to God.

Moses had to remove his shoes to get closer to God. In a way, Mary removed the dirt and grime from Jesus' feet to get closer to him.

We should all ask ourselves, what is it that is blocking us from getting closer to God?

Is it a person, like Judas, getting in our way? Is it our own doubts – like some of the disciples had? Is it something we have done in the past that we just don't think God would approve of? Are we angry with God? Do we just not find enough time in our busy lives to focus on him more?

Whatever it is, we should try to remove that obstacle, or 'shoe' that is in our way. That is what our Good Friday service will be about. You'll get to keep your shoes on, but during the service we will be asking you to leave your baggage, or obstacles, behind and start a new relationship with God.

The celebration of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus began a month ago and hits its peak starting next Sunday when Holy Week begins.

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday – where we will celebrate the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. On Thursday of next week we will celebrate the Last Supper, Friday will be Good Friday where we will remember Christ's sacrifice on the cross and what it really means to us today. Then on Easter Sunday we will celebrate Christ rising from the dead.

Holy week is a great time for us all to come together as a Christian community. As a community, we hold each other together in a way that helps us all grow closer to God.

Kind of like a shoelace holds the shoe together and tightly on your foot.

But, not unlike a shoelace, sometimes we get broken and fall away. When that happens the remaining laces can still hold that shoe on, but it isn't quite the same, is it? And that piece of lace that broke off? It will never be as strong as it was when it was part of the larger lace.

So the Easter Season is the time to repair our laces, if you will, and grow in the Christian Community, and to remove those obstacles in our lives that are between us and God. And if you know someone carrying around a broken shoelace, maybe it is time to offer them a new one.

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