

There once was a college student named Bill. Bill's hair always looked wild like he just rolled out of bed. He wore t-shirts with holes in them, jeans that were tattered and dirty, and most of the time he didn't even bother to wear shoes. Despite his outer appearance Bill was a very smart student studying to be an architect. He figured that one day he would have to look the part, but until then he'd be free to dress as he pleased.

One-day Bill decided that he was going to attend church. He was a life long Christian and since he didn't have a car on campus he found a church that was right across the street from his apartment. He had been watching this particular congregation for weeks as the people dressed to the nines walked out of the doors and stepped into their expensive cars. Here goes nothing he thought.

That morning Bill got up and got dressed in his same holey t-shirt and tattered jeans. He ran his hand through his hair and thought with the sun outside surely he shouldn't be constricted to shoes. So he left as he was. He entered the enormous sanctuary and began walking up the center aisle to look for a place to sit. The faces on the people sitting in the pews were disturbing, they looked uncomfortable, but they didn't say anything to him. Bill looked back and forth, but couldn't seem to find a seat. The place was packed. As he approached the front, getting closer and closer to the pulpit Bill was unsure of what to do, so he shrugged his shoulders and sat on the carpet right in front of the pulpit.

As Bill sat down tension seemed to fill the air. The members were getting vividly upset. And then from the back of the sanctuary an usher made his way up the aisle towards Bill. Now in his eighties the usher with silver hair, a three piece suit, and a pocket watch had a determined look on his face. The community knew him as a patriarch

of the congregation, someone who had been around for many generations, and someone who was looked up to and admired. As he slowly made his way to the front leaning on his cane, he could here the members whisper, “You can’t blame him for what he’s about to do. He’s just trying to keep order. How can you expect a man of his age and background to understand a college kid on the floor?” It took a long time for him to get to the end of the aisle. All eyes are focused on the usher. The room is totally silent. The minister can’t even begin his sermon until the usher does what it is he has to do. When the man reaches the front of the sanctuary the congregation watches as he, with great difficulty, lowers himself and sits next to Bill on the floor so he won’t be alone.

The minister regains his composure and says, “What I am about to preach you will never remember. What you have just seen you will never forget.”

The Gospel lesson that we just read is one of the most memorable stories in the Bible. It was the night before Jesus’ crucifixion and betrayal. His public ministry had come to an end, and now Jesus turned his focus to the disciples. They were preparing to share their last meal together, and as was custom their feet needed to be cleaned before they could eat. As I’m sure you can imagine cleaning the feet of dinner guests was one of the most demeaning jobs. It was usually done by the lowest of the slaves. But no matter how disgusting, it was necessary as people wore sandals and did most of their traveling by foot. They traveled along trails that were sometimes dusty, muddy, or covered in camel or donkey dung. So when they arrived at the house it was only a polite gesture that they would have a slave greet them at the front door to clean their feet. Who would want that stuff in their house after all!

When the disciples arrived for their final meal with Jesus I'm sure they expected all the details would be taken care of; the food prepared, the slave set to wash their feet. But when they sat around the table it was Jesus who took a towel and a basin of water to wash their feet. Simon Peter was shocked. I'm sure he was wondering as are we, why the Son of God, the Messiah, and the king would wash their dirty, yucky feet. Why wasn't someone else taking care of this job? Surely someone knew it was their responsibility. But Jesus made it very clear. He wasn't doing this job because it was fun, he was washing their feet to be an example, "Servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them." Isn't this a great reminder that we are all equal in the eyes of God, despite our social status, our educational levels, or how much money in the bank. Isn't it a great reminder that the ministry that happens in this place isn't someone else's responsibility? Isn't a great reminder that God needs us to do something and not just recline at the table and enjoy of the meal that God has given to us. Why is it that we think it's someone else's responsibility to serve on altar guild, clean the church, serve on council, lead the Bible studies, help with Vacation Bible School, help with outreach, serve as lay visitors, count the money, or to do anything else within the life of our congregation? Why is it that we think we are exempt from doing anything? It clear that even Jesus the Son of God, the king of kings, the Lord of Lords used the spiritual gifts God had given to him and that we are called to do the same, use our gifts to glorify the one who gave us those gifts.

We have a wonderful congregation full of people who are generous, caring, and full of love. We have more spiritual gifts than we deserve here in this place. Today, as we learn about an act that is full of humility, and love, and grace we are reminded that all we

have belongs to God, and that all we have should serve God. It certainly is easier to give money to the church than to put a few hours towards teaching Sunday school or help stock the Little Free Pantry, but if your spiritual gifts, the gifts God has given to you to use, are in those areas we are called to use them and not let them lie dormant.

Pastor Lynn once shared with me a story about his grandfather. He said his grandfather was a hard worker all of his life, and he was known to say that at the end of his life he wanted his body to be so worn out that getting a new one would be worth it. Isn't that the way we should feel about our spiritual gifts? That at the end of our life we have used the gifts that God gave to us for service in his church and in his world so much that we have nothing left to give? Isn't that what Jesus does for us this night as he handed his body over for us in the Passover Meal so that we could be forgiven of our sins, reminded of God's love, and share that Good News with others? How well do our lives reflect that goodness, mercy, and humble service?

Surely the college kid named Bill will always remember that usher, the old man that showed the face of Christ to him by humbling himself and sitting on the ground no matter how difficult it was for him, what will we remember? And what will we give others to remember? We are the only face of Christ that some people will ever see. What will your reflection look like? Let us walk like Christ today and always in the sure and certain hope that someone else will see Christ's light in us. Amen.