

What a letdown! This story begins with intensity. The devil having entered into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. Jesus knowing this. Knowing the great suffering that was soon coming to Him. Knowing that He had come from God and was about to go back to God. The drama is building. Surely Jesus is about to say something profound or do something divine and inspiring to leave His disciples breathless. But no, He takes a towel, a plain, ordinary towel, wraps it around His waist, and with a basin of water, washes His disciples' feet. Not what anyone there is expecting. Not a grand climax to finish off the story. Just a normal, mundane task that any servant could do.

But perhaps this is the point. Perhaps this common task, complete with a towel and a basin of water, is the grand, divine climax the disciples, and we, should have been expecting. It is the exclamation point to His entire life here on earth and to His public ministry. Jesus wraps the towel around His waist, and with a basin of water, washes His disciples' feet as a common, everyday servant not in spite of the fact that He is God and Lord, but because He is God and Lord.

But this makes the disciples uncomfortable, especially Peter. "*You shall never wash my feet!*" This is not how my God and Lord should act. He should do majestic things, not common, everyday serving things.

And why is this? This question comes from our mouths, too, because we are right there with Peter and the other disciples in our thinking. Why should Jesus not be so serving toward others? Because if this is our God, then it should also be us. If our great God and Lord is perfectly at home and comfortable being wrapped with a servant's towel, then what right do we have to expect more for ourselves?

The world has infected us. We study the world more than we study our Lord. And so we elevate ourselves, for this the world does. We expect to be treated in a certain manner, like we're somebodies, not nobodies.

But Jesus became a nobody. He put Himself, not first, but last. He wrapped Himself with a towel. He got down on His knees and washed their feet. Well, that's beneath me! And we're right. He got down even beneath you and me.

And that bothers us, too. We expect to be served by those who are lower than us. But our God and Lord? He belongs up high, not lower than us. But that's the pagan way of thinking. Their gods would never do what Jesus did. Wash feet? Hardly. And even worse, be thrown wounded and bleeding onto a cross to die? Never!

Just wait, Peter. It makes your skin crawl for Jesus to wash your feet? Wait until He ascends a cross for you. How will that make you feel? It made him weep bitterly because Peter's sins put Him on that cross, as did yours, and mine. Can we pass by His cross and think nothing of it? Apparently, many do. They treat Holy Week like any other week of the year. But God has brought you here tonight to change your thinking about Jesus and about yourself. He wants you

to see that He counts you as so dear and precious that He lowers Himself even into hell for you so that He raises you up into heaven by doing this.

Jesus wrapped a towel around His waist, and with the water in the basin of the font, He bathed you, and not just your feet. And with the common bread and wine on the altar, He serves you His own body and blood. Your God and Lord is perfectly at home and comfortable doing these things. Common things. Washing, eating and drinking. And through them, serving you. Being your servant. Doing for you what you need the most, and what you could never do for yourself. He takes your sins and He gives you His own innocence. He washes you, all of you, clean. And you are clean, forgiven, for this your baptism declares to you daily.

Jesus is your God and Lord, which is why He got down on His knees for you. It's why He stumbled beneath His cross for you. It's why He will never tire of serving you, forgiving your sins and giving you a portion in His eternal life for you.

So, that towel around Jesus' waist? It's around yours now. And because Jesus serves you, you will lower yourself before others to serve their needs. You will be Christ to them. Because it is, after all, Jesus' towel, and Jesus' hands doing the serving through you. Amen.