

Think about the men sitting around this table...each one chosen, each one called, each one commissioned, each one found by Jesus and brought into this circle of twelve for some reason that Jesus just *knew*, knew why he needed *them* in particular for this mission, this ministry. Each of them is around this table for a reason, for something that they bring quite literally to the table, and yet...as Jesus kneeled before them to wash their feet, this immensely vulnerable and intimate act of love...think about what must have been going through their heads, watching their friend, their Savior, their brother, their Messiah, humble himself in this way in order to show them just how very much they are loved and how they are called to love...

There sit James and John...brothers, fishermen, sometimes seeming a bit like the cocky know-it-alls of the group. They've got some ego things to deal with...the thought that Jesus just recently had to call them out in front of everyone for bickering about who was the greatest, even as they are walking in Jerusalem preparing for Jesus' death, the idea that even *their mom* approached Jesus about them getting pride of place in his resurrection. And yet...here kneels Jesus before them...cradling their feet and their egos with love and grace and care.

There sits Matthew...someone the world would brand as one of the greatest sinners, he's spent all this time with Jesus hearing about how to care

for the poor and needy amongst them, knowing that so many still probably see him as just another dirty tax collector, taking stock of people's lives in coins and taxes, seeing their worthiness in how much they have, not in who they are. Throughout his time with Jesus he has probably had to endure a few more dirty looks than the rest, simply because of who people knew he *was*, instead of who he is now. Shame, regret, and longing to be seen for the changed man he is even as he still wonders if he's worthy roil through his brain. And yet...here kneels Jesus before him...cradling his feet and his shame and regret with love and grace and care.

There sits Andrew...Peter's brother, another fisherman, one of the first to find Jesus and follow him, but somehow never a part of the inner circle. Having to watch from the sidelines as his brother somehow always ends up in the center of it all, even when he keeps messing up. Wondering how it's always James, John, and Peter, never James, John, Peter, and Andrew, why he isn't a part of his sibling pairing. Angst, loneliness, resentment sometimes can't help but nip at his heels, wondering why it's never him, even when he was the one who told his brother they'd found the Messiah. And yet...here kneels Jesus before him...cradling his feet and his resentment with love and grace and care.

There sits Peter...once called Simon, Andrew's brother, a fisherman, somehow always just as quick with a biting comment made out of anger as he is with self-deprecating fear that he's not enough. The Rock. The one Jesus will build his church upon. The one to confess Jesus as Lord and then be called Satan. The one bold enough to leave the boat and try and walk on water, only to sink. The one who always seems to get it so very right, then so very wrong time after time after time. Constantly questioning whether he's worthy, even when he's shown his gumption over and over. Somehow always so faithful and always so screwed up at the same time. And yet...here kneels Jesus before him...cradling his feet and his insecurity with love and grace and care.

There sits Judas...the keeper of the common purse, the one destined for betrayal, the one we never hear about except for in the worst moment of his life. He sits there, knowing the journey he has taken with Jesus and knowing full well what he will do in only a matter of hours. Knowing he will kiss the cheek of his Savior and friend and condemn him to death. Feeling the weight of silver in his pockets, blood money taken for reasons unknown...greed, fear, misplaced assumptions about what was right... And yet...here kneels Jesus before him...cradling his feet and his betrayal with love and grace and care.

Here we all sit...maybe not gathered around our beloved table together, but gathered around tables nonetheless, and we each bring some concoction of emotion with us. Sometimes, a little James and John, cocky, thinking we've got this better than anyone else, like we're the most deserving of love and attention because our faith is bigger than most and our church attendance is filled with gold stars. Sometimes Matthew, wishing we could escape our pasts and hoping that people would just see who we are now, not who we once were, longing to forget our mistakes. Sometimes Andrew, bitter, resentful that we don't feel seen. Wondering why we are the ones who get left behind, who don't get loved quite as hard and as visibly as everyone else. Sometimes Peter, caught between having it and so very much not having it under control. Wondering whether we are worthy, fearing we most definitely aren't. Seeing ourselves only for our missteps and screwups and half forged attempts at getting it right, only to fail miserably. Sometimes Judas, our worst features on display, our worst instincts taking hold, making catastrophic mistakes that we don't know how to fix or worse fearing that we don't want to fix them. And yet...here kneels Jesus before us...cradling our feet and our fears, our mistakes, our fragility, our insecurities, our worries, our brokenness, our put-togetherness, our everything with love and grace and care.

And that is the wonder of tonight...that somehow, even when he is about to walk through the greatest act of love this world has ever known, dying for all of us so that we might live, Jesus ups the love game just a little bit more. Cradling our vulnerabilities between his hands and washing them with love and care, in a moment reminiscent of our baptisms so that we might remember that we are so very crazily loved, that the only thing that truly defines us is our identity as children of God, that the only thing that God sees is our preciousness, that no matter how we see ourselves, God sees us as worthy, as deserving, as holy. Tonight is not about our mistakes and our missteps and all the things we think we are lacking, it is about our belovedness as children of God, whom Jesus knees before and says, let me wash away all those things which are worrying your mind and aching on your heart, let them go and hold this truth, you are loved. You are loved.

It's not easy, especially in a world that seeks to make us feel unworthy and not good enough constantly, and yet, we are, and nothing can change it, and it's our call to remind each other of that daily. Because sometimes we know that holding our own belovedness is impossible, but when someone else reminds us of it, it is tangible and real. I imagine in the days and weeks after Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples cycled through those same struggles, what if I'm not good enough, why did he do this for us, *for me*,

what if, why, what if, why...and hopefully one of them had the courage to say, hey, remember how he washed your feet that night. What if, nothing. Why? Because you're loved. May we do the same for each other, so that when the sacredness of this night, the holiness of this moment that feels so tangibly close starts to ebb a little bit, we can be the one to remind each other, hey, there are no need for what ifs, and the only answer to why is that you're loved, by God and by me and by your family of God, to whom you preciously belong.

My beloved siblings...let Jesus wash your feet tonight and wipe away whatever it is that is chaining you up and holding you in. Let God's unconditional, unceasing love wash over you, and when you need a reminder, look no further than your family of God, and when your sibling needs a reminder, be bold enough to be the one to say...hey...I love you and so does God. **AMEN!!!**