

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I don't normally think of hives as a positive thing, but the first time I was at a service where there was going to be foot washing, I wanted no part of it, and because of the allergic reaction I was suffering, I had an excuse for not participating. I was willing to wash the feet of another person but I did not want anyone washing my feet. I wonder if I would have been as self-conscious, even embarrassed, if it had been Jesus who was going to wash my feet. I am guessing that at least some of the disciples, not just Peter, probably had a similar reaction to what was happening in the opening verses of our gospel reading from John. After all, washing someone's feet was the action of a slave. Teachers, rabbis, the Lord, the Son of God, do not wash people's feet. But Jesus confounds expectations, those of the disciples, and our own.

As Jesus told Peter, so he tells us: "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." He washes us, and he chooses us, he chose me when I was a helpless baby, he chose many of you in the same kind of circumstances, when you were also a helpless baby. He chooses all those who are baptized whether as babies or as adults. Remember that he said we do not choose him, but he chose us.

So baptism sets the course for our lives until we die, regardless of when we were baptized. Washed once in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and this washing is a way of life, dying daily to sin, then raised up daily to a new life in and through Jesus, empowered and emboldened by the Holy Spirit, given in this washing.

Washed by Jesus, the course is set. The command is given. Jesus who washed the feet of his disciples, who gave himself on the cross, simply states, "For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." "Do as I have done." Sounds easy, does it not? Simply do as Jesus does, love as he loves, give ourselves away in service, humble service, until we can literally do it no more. The disciples did not get it, not that night, not the next day when Jesus, already arrested was spat upon, beaten, crowned with a crown of thorns, condemned to death. The disciples were fearful for their own lives, grieving, confused, disoriented. It was not until later, that the disciples began to understand. Washing by Jesus is to lead to a way of life, dying daily, and daily rising to a life of service, of giving oneself away. Now of course the disciples did not get it, but we already know what it means to be washed by Jesus. Our confirmation students are taught what it means to live life when washed by Jesus in baptism, that we sin, but we are forgiven and die daily to rise again. We try to convey to our ninth graders that we are to love and trust in God above all else and live our lives accordingly, even though we live in a world that cares not about our faith, that tempts us and misleads us, to do it our way, so to speak. We are often told by our world, our culture, that we can have everything we want without any personal sacrifice or cost, that it is okay to be selfish.

But Jesus says "Do as I have done." What did he do? He washed the feet of His disciples, but he did not stop there. He died for them. He died for us. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. When Peter heard Jesus say that he would have no part of Jesus unless washed by him, he asked that Jesus wash all of him. Washed by Jesus, and confronted with the truth, Jesus himself, we hear his words again: "Do as I have done." And there is more, that ties in with what he has done and does for us. Love one another, as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this they will know you are my disciples if you love one another.

Sometime ago, I remarked in a children's sermon, and in my sermon to you, that there are times when I look at that cross on the wall and it is not empty. Jesus who loves us enough to hang there in our place, shows us that eternal life is through dying and living with him.

Consider that Jesus chose to do what we often want to runaway from, the Word became flesh, went the way we cannot go if left to ourselves. Washed by Jesus, dying to self and sin, rising to serve, free to follow Jesus, to do as he has done, to go to the end of our lives giving ourselves in service to one another, to those in need, to those less fortunate than ourselves. Left to ourselves we cannot love as Jesus loves us, but washed by the Lamb of God, we are filled with a love that cannot be taken from us. Washed by the Lamb of God, we die to selfish desires and wants, we rise to live life as Jesus lived. Washed by the Lamb of God we give our lives in service as did Jesus who lives in and through us.

AMEN