

Thursday Holy week 2009

What happened next....?

'Mmmm, smells good doesn't it?, but first before we tuck in, let's deal with these smelly feet, John yours are right under my nose, and I can't enjoy my food when all I can smell is your filthy feet'

Much laughter from the men, and John, stood up as if taking the hint and went to fetch some water and a towel,

But as he returned Jesus took the water from him, and wrapped the towel around his own waist, then touching his shoulder, told John to sit.

Once he had sat, Jesus took John's feet one at a time and washed them gently.

The other disciples looked on, mouths wide open, shock and disbelief....

'Jesus, what are you doing?' John tried to struggle free...

'John, do you not know how I love you? I wish to do this for you tonight'

'Peter, you too'

'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'

'You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand'

'No, you shall never wash my feet' but Jesus continued, gently cleaning his feet all the same, massaging the tired toes,

'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me'

'then Lord, not just my feet but my hands as well' and Peter thrust his rough hands under the water that Jesus had begun to pour over his second foot, 'and my head!'

The other disciples laughed remembering the time Peter had

wanted to build a tent, 'all or nothing eh? Peter' one of them said, and they all laughed again, even Jesus, who had been quieter tonight.

Jesus hadn't laughed all day, and when he smiled he seemed sad, even his breathing seemed sorrowful. But now he laughed, as he dried Peter's hands and feet and move on to the next man,

'A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean, and you are clean'

Kneeling by Judas' side, he took his feet and poured water over them,

'though not every one of you' and Jesus looked up into Judas' eyes for a while before drying his feet.

The smell of the food worked its way into the men's bodies and stomachs began to grumble and complain, but none of the men voluntarily made a sound. There was a ghostly hush around the room.

Each man, in turn had their feet washed by Jesus, and when John tried to wash his in return, he shook his head and quietly paddled in the dirty water and then mopped them with the damp towel, 'that will have to do'

Then Jesus left the towel and basin of dirty water by the door, before returning to the table and taking bread, which he tore and shared with the men, dipping it onto the bitter herbs he said,

'good huh?' and the other men began to eat

'do you understand what I have done for you?'

Blank faces

'You call me teacher?'

Noises of assent - 'and Lord'

'and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and

teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet'

the men looked at each other, and James said to Andrew, 'I don't fancy your feet' and Thadeus could be seen to shudder as he whispered, 'I don't do feet'

'I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you' a shameful silence as the men looked at their clean feet.

Ashamed that they were not willing to do what Jesus had done for them,
or shamed that they had allowed Jesus, their Lord and teacher to do such a menial task? Emotions were confused.

'I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him'.

Leaning forward and lowering his voice, 'now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.'

Now eat, I have looked forward to this meal, to eating with you all,

'But we've been eating all week',

'yes Andrew, but tonight is special, different. Even if you forget all the other meals we've shared, I want you to remember this one. Promise me you'll eat together in remembrance of me'

'alright', 'ok', 'of course'

Thomas, 'but why?'

Jesus picked up the bread and again tore at it, taking a piece for himself he handed another piece to Judas,

'But not all of you will be blessed, remember the scripture,
He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me

But before it happens, you must know, if you don't already, the truth that I've been trying to share with you,

I am he

The truth is whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me'

The men all bowed their heads as if in prayer, except the one left holding a piece of bread, and he, instead fixed his gaze upon Jesus, almost daring him to make his move, before throwing down the crust.

'oooah' Jesus threw his hands into the air, Judas broke his gaze, but the others fixed theirs upon him,

'I tell you the truth, one of you *is* going to betray me'

A look of mistrust paced around the room, each disciple weighing the other up. Which one did they mistrust the most? Thomas was always asking questions, was it him? Peter often seemed to make the biggest mistakes - maybe the fisherman did protest too much when he asked for his head to be washed?

And then, the inward questioning, 'me?'

Surely John would know - he and Jesus being so close - Peter beckoned to him, 'ask him'

And so he did

And Jesus, sighed that heavy, sorrowful sigh, tore another piece of bread, dipped it in the dish, and then walked slowly round the table, twelve pairs of eyes following him intently,

And handed it

To Judas.

Judas looked up at the men, he stood, then as he took the bread from Jesus, shivered, his eyes seemed to darken, and his skin became grey

Jesus looked him in the eye, 'what you are about to do, do quickly', and as he left, the others not knowing what he had planned, Judas' shoulders slumped, and he looked as if he carried the sin of the whole world in his heart.

Lynne Chitty prayer.