

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 14 February 2021

Welcome & Notices
Session Clerk: Keith Ferres

Hymn 471 (R)
Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: John 13:1-20
Loris Balderson

Offering

Hymn 67 (RCH)
Thou didst leave Thy throne

Sermon
SERVE **One Another**
Galatians 5:13

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 512 (RCH)
Take my life

Benediction
Threefold Amen

NOTICES

14 February 2021

Website: www.blackburnpc.org.au

Wednesday 17 February 1.30 pm Ash Wednesday
Prayer Meeting.
Sunday 21 February 11 am Divine Worship.
All Welcome, Covid safe practices.

Join in Today

Forty Lenten Reflections [15 mins per day]
Commencing Ash Wednesday. See details inside.

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: Marjorie Hall

and



Rhys and Rhonda Hall
(unrelated to Marjorie)
actively serving with
Pioneers in Uganda.



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GARDENIA ST.
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
BLACKBURN

WELCOME

14 February 2021



Christ washing the disciple's feet [detail]

Tintoretto 1575-1580

The National Gallery, London



The authorities resorted to a range of repressive measures against protesters and perceived dissidents, including enforced disappearance, mass arrests, torture and other ill-treatment, excessive use of force and severe probation measures, particularly after protests against the President on 20 September. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained at least 20 journalists solely for peacefully expressing their opinions... The authorities restricted Christians' right to worship by closing at least 25 churches and failing to provide approval for thousands of others to be built or repaired. Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants were arbitrarily arrested and detained for irregularly entering or leaving Egypt.

Amnesty International

Islam is seen as the central pillar of society in Egypt and Christians are viewed as second-class citizens. Laws restrict Christians from sharing the gospel and although converting to Christianity is not forbidden by law, it is heavily opposed. Those who leave Islam to follow Jesus may lose custody of their children or be imprisoned for sharing their faith. Conversion is seen as shameful to a family's honour and can lead to threats, beatings and banishment.

Christians are monitored by their local communities and attacked for sharing about Jesus. Mob attacks often go unpunished by local authorities, leaving Christians even more vulnerable. Extremist Islamic preachers continue to fuel a climate of intolerance and hostility. Authorities and community members restrict churches and Christian organisations from building new churches or running social services. Christians of all backgrounds find it extremely difficult to find places to gather as a church.

4. SERVE *One Another*

Sermon
Notes

I was interested to read that the Venetian painter and sculptor Tintoretto painted Christ washing his disciples feet on at least six occasions.

Wikipedia suggests it may have been because of the challenge of such a "complex image", but I couldn't help wondering if this reportedly undemanding and generous man took something even more challenging from John's Gospel.

The story behind Tintoretto's image is in John 13. Today we explore the *one another* phrase (in verse 14). It's about *the mind of the servant*.

Don't be surprised if the implications are both profound and practical.

1. A protest at Passover with Jesus (John 13:1, 6-8a)

In the world of the Roman empire social status was strictly hierarchical. The emperor was divine. Roman citizens were privileged. Women and children mattered less than men. Slaves were, well, simply expendable.

In this social climate there were strict protocols. Typically before a meal the slave of second lowest status would take the sandals of arriving guests and the lowest ranking slave would wash their feet.

The Law of Moses impacted Jewish behaviour to a greater or lesser degree within the Roman Empire. We know from the other Gospels that on the road the disciples had been arguing about who would be greatest in the kingdom. (Matthew 18, Mark 9, Luke 9)

Our scene is set "the day before the Passover festival". John makes clear that for Jesus this meal was of monumental significance; "the hour had come" (13:1).

It appears no one had taken it upon themselves to wash anyone's feet. Jesus embraced this moment. He took off his outer garment and with a towel apron and a basin of water started washing feet.

Stunned and perhaps humiliated, it seems no one spoke until Jesus came to Peter. Then, true to form, Peter protested. "Lord, are you going to wash my feet!" To this Jesus replied "You don't understand this now, but you will later" (13:7).

What was going on?

2. The cross work of Jesus (John 13:8b, Philippians 2:6-11)

This washing is more than a lesson in humility. Jesus says it is essential.

Jesus pointing beyond the usual act of courtesy, as the dialogue with Peter makes clear. Well then thought Peter if it is essential, wash all of me! "Wash my hands and my head too"! But that was unnecessary.

An Invitation: Forty Lenten Reflections

In 1945 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was executed by the Nazi's for his outspoken opposition to Hitler. Would you like to participate in 40 daily emailed Lenten reflections on Christian Discipleship drawn from his writings? Why not try this series of daily Lenten devotions? Commencing on Ash Wednesday, 17 February. Email, phone or grab me on Sunday to say "Yes!"
gbradbeer@gmail.com

This washing, not at the commencement of the meal, but in the middle of the Passover, is deeply symbolic, a kind of acted parable. Leon Morris says "It is a parable in action setting out that great principle of lowly service which finds its supreme embodiment in the cross". By this washing Jesus foreshadows the cross itself. All disciples must each be washed clean by their Lord. He came as a humble servant to offer this costly cleansing.

Many today "are ready to admire Jesus' life and to praise the sublimity of his moral teaching, but they cannot bring themselves to believe that Christ died for their sins, and that without that death they would be lost in sin" (AM Hunter)

This is the great scandal of the cross.

3. Enlisted servants of Jesus Christ (John 13:14, Galatians 5:13). What does this mean for us? Well two things.

Firstly, there is a kind of infection that contaminates all our best thoughts and actions. No matter how much we try we cannot escape it. This problem is not so much out there; it is within me.

There is a (likely apocryphal) story that when *The Times* asked readers to explain what was wrong with the world, one responded with a very short letter. "Dear Sir, I am. Yours, GK Chesterton".

At cross of Christ we are offered personal forgiveness. It is the sanitising station the whole world needs. John says "he loved them to the very end" (13:1). Can we see this?

Second, those who have been washed by Jesus, their Servant Master, themselves engage in active service. They take up the towel and the basin in humility to serve *one another*. Numerous *one another* passages in the New Testament letters show both the priority of this important struggle.

The apparent hymn in Philippians (2:6-10) makes the focus and inspiration of the early believers brilliantly clear. Our service to *one another* shows this is the God we adore.