

This is a night of passion. This is a night of betrayal. This is a night filled with the anguish of relationships, those torn apart and those fulfilled.

The twelve came together on this night so many years ago to share a common meal. They had known this man, this Jesus, for three long years.

They knew what made him happy, they knew what could anger him, they had seen him frustrated—sometimes at them—sometimes at others—but through it all they had seen his remarkable capacity to love them. To serve them. To teach them. Not to just talk about ideals, but to show them how to live ideals.

Jesus was a builder, like his father before him. Jesus as a builder of dreams. He was a builder of love. He was a builder of relationships.

Relationships are all about give and take, he said. Relationships are about forgiving, he said. Relationships are about second chances, he said. Relationships are about the giving of oneself to another—joyfully-- not out of duty.

On that night so many years ago, he took a basin of water. He gathered his friends—the ones that has been through so much with him—the ones who had seen him do so many astonishing things, the one who broke through their concept of a law written in stone to show them a law written on their hearts. And he washed their feet.

They were uncomfortable while Jesus did this. They didn't want him to wash their feet. It wasn't a hard thing for Jesus to do—and I myself don't mind washing other people's feet. The hard part is letting someone else wash your feet.

It is an intimate act of service that draws out the vulnerability on the part of the disciples, or on the part of anyone who allows this service.

And that's why Jesus did it.

We must be vulnerable to Christ. We must be willing to open up our hearts entirely to him. We must allow our hearts to open to Christ in a way they probably haven't been open since we were little children. That's what it takes to follow Christ.

We need to be open to the changes he will shape in us.

Tonight, we will take away all the trappings, all the little things—the candlesticks, the cross, the linens, the flowers, the books, everything. They didn't exist when Jesus washed his disciples feet. They didn't need to. All the disciples needed was their relationship with Jesus.

Think, for a second, what your relationship with God would be like without this building. Without the fine music. Without the pretty flower, the robes, the beautiful windows.

Would you still feel God in your heart? Would you still serve the one who loved and served us? Would you still enter into a relationship with Jesus, the Christ, the Holy God? Our ability to be vulnerable enough to be entirely open to the Presence of God is the important part of our faith. It's not the trappings.

So, close your eyes for a moment. Picture this room as an empty building. No cross, no candles, no fancy clothes, no music. Nothing except a man. He walks into this room and looks at each of you. And on this night, like the night so many years ago, he asks YOU, "May I wash your feet?"

Amen.