

## Sermons at All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Preached by Rev Alison Heal on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Bible passages: John 13: 1-5, 32-35 and John 15:8-14

John 13: 1-5, 32-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. <sup>2</sup>The devil had already decided<sup>[a]</sup> that Judas son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus. And during supper <sup>3</sup>Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup>got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. <sup>5</sup>Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

*Later that evening, Jesus said: I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Who do you know, who's most likely to get up during an important supper, to clean people up?

I can't read your minds, but I suspect that many of you may be thinking of a mother, thinking of yourself, if you are a mother.

I presume that the parents here for the baptism might both be spending a lot of time cleaning up their little boy at the moment, and that other members of the family will also be taking part in giving the baby a wipe up from time to time, especially his grandmother.

In Jesus' day, the person responsible for cleaning dirty feet after a journey wasn't a mother, but a servant. Although, occasionally, mothers may get the feeling that there isn't much difference between motherhood, and servanthood...

Whoever was meant to be washing feet at that meal, it certainly wasn't meant to be the group leader. This is why Jesus' friend Peter, in the bit we didn't read, refused to let Jesus wash his feet at first. Jesus was turning everything upside down (again), and introducing an idea of servant leadership. An idea which Christian countries have struggled to grasp, because being a leader is so tied up with the idea of using your power to serve yourself.

Mothers may find this idea of servant leadership less of a surprise. I was intrigued to read that countries led by women came out of Covid better than countries led by men. Women like Jacinta Adern brought some of the wisdom and experience of motherhood into leading a country through a pandemic, and achieved a form of servant leadership which met the needs of that extraordinary time.

So is Jesus being like a mother, as much as being like a servant, when he washes his friends' feet? To some extent, yes. If we listen again to the later part of the gospel, which.. read to us, Jesus explains what he's doing.

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just **as** I have loved you, you also should love one another.

He's giving us a model of servant love, and commanding us to follow it. That word 'as' is very important in the Bible. Just **as** I have loved you, washing your feet, taking the place of your servant, not in terms of being a doormat, but with loving authority, Jesus tells his friends *this* is the way to love each other.

Just **as** I have loved you, you also should love one another.

Before we hear the second reading from John, let's take some time in silence, to reflect on our relationships, in our families, at work, with our friends, in church. Let's hold up our relationships to the light of Jesus' teaching about how we are to love one another.

PAUSE

Let's stand again, to hear the second part of our Gospel reading.

## Reading 2

### John 15:8-14

<sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become<sup>[a]</sup> my disciples. <sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup>"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you.

You may have found yourself anxious, or felt guilty, when I asked you to think about your relationships in the light of Jesus' teaching and example of loving each other. I don't know about you, but if I look at my relationships I'll find ways I'm not loving like Jesus. Many times I've not given enough. And we should also look out for the ways we've given too much. As we saw, Jesus wasn't being a doormat when he took on his serving role with his friends. It took a lot of authority and responsibility to take on this role of loving service.

So if we looked at our relationships and found... selfishness, or co-dependency, compassion fatigue, or confusion... Jesus' message to us here isn't TRY HARDER.

Does this come as a surprise? I know a lot of us hear Jesus' words and think: 'I'm really not loving well enough, I have to try harder'.

Some of us think this despite a lifetime of hearing, through church worship and through holy communion and bible study, that 'We love, because he first loved us'. Or, in Jesus' words we've just heard: '**As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.**'

I don't really want to say much more to you today. Just to remember that God is love, Jesus is God in his love, poured out for us on the cross, and he asks us, commands us, to abide in his love.

Loving each other, loving our families, loving ourselves, loving in a scary and violent world, doesn't work all that well when we try harder in our own strength. Do you remember Geoff's shopping trolley comparison, last week? The trolley that doesn't go where you planned, but

goes off on its own determined way? That's us, that's our human nature. We love, and we want to show love, but our own egos and fears drag us off away from loving thoughts and actions.

So we must abide in Jesus. Abide in his love. Abide in the one who laid down his life for us. And out of his love, his love at work in us, will flow that love for our families, for our friends, for our broken world.

We'll take a moment in silent prayer now, to receive God's love. It might help you to hold your hands out, palms up, as a sign of being ready to receive. And as a mark of your acceptance to abide in his love, we have the moment at the font, at the end of our service.

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How do we abide in God? We offer our lives to him. Let's stand now, and if you're looking for a way to invite Jesus to work in your life, this song is an invitation.