

March 10

“NOT GONNA DO IT”

When Everything Went ~~Wrong~~. Right!

Viewing Holy Week Through the Eyes of Peter



“Not Gonna Do It”

John 13:1-9

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

Special Music:

“Wash Me Clean”

Josh Garrels

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvB2bTtaSKQ>

John 13:1-9

1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;

4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

7 Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

8 “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

9 “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

THE PIANO

Gayle loved antiques. It was a passion she had inherited from her Irish mother. She had so much appreciation for the lines and design elements that could only be found in antique furniture and appliances. The workmanship was from a time when craftsmen took pride in their work, using their hands and skills to create items that could be considered art, even when their usefulness had ceased to seem practical. If one were to enter Gayle's home, one would discover treasures carefully placed to best display these items in a way that brought out the creativity and craftsmanship of the artisans who had originally carved, assembled, and polished them. Her home did not present itself with the air of a museum, so much as a testament to the beauty of people who took pride in their work.

But this meant that Gayle spent every weekend searching high and low for lost treasures of the past that she could bring back to life. This weekend she happened to be visiting a few resale shops off the beaten path in Parable, TX. Not everything from the past was worth saving and Gayle was very selective. She preferred finding gems that were neglected and in need of restoring, rather than fully restored items in which she had no input into the process of restoration. One might think that she was overly picky, but Gayle wasn't satisfied with pieces where the restorer committed indiscretions to cut corners when bringing these treasures back to life. Often those shortcuts were not visible without an expert's inspection.

As she entered Audrey's Forgotten Treasures, she knew that she would find something that she could bring back to life. There were all the ordinary widgets

and gadgets that had resurfaced from a time gone by. Some were dented and broken, while others collected rust from neglect. There was a good selection of mid-20th century glassware and several dish sets, somewhat complete except for a missing cup or chipped salad plates. Rusty toys lined the shelves along the wall, with a plethora of board games that she knew, without opening, would be missing pieces. The shelves and cabinets were dusty even though it was obvious that some overworked employee or owner did their best to keep up with the cleanliness of the store. Seldom was there money for good help in stores like Audrey's.

There were only a few people in the store that day, mostly treasure hunters like herself looking for that silk purse, or that perfect end table. Gayle slowly worked her way to the back of the store and, as she suspected, things became less organized and more neglected the farther back she went. Here were the things that might eventually find their way to the front of the store if the owner found the time and energy to deal with them. Most of the items found here were larger pieces of furniture, some of which would probably be a better fit for the city dump.

Audrey poked her head out from behind an old wardrobe and surprised Gayle. "Can I help you find something? I'm Audrey."

"I'm Gayle, Audrey, and I'm just looking. I'm not really sure what I am looking for, but I will know it when I find it."

“Well,” said Audrey, “don’t hesitate to poke about all you want. Give me a shout-out if there is something I can help you with.

“Will do, Audrey,” Gayle replied.

Audrey went back to her work. And that is when Gayle spotted it, a mid-century Henry F. Miller parlor baby grand piano. It was a wonder that she spotted it as it was covered with rags, boxes, and whatnot. Underneath all the dust and grime, Gayle could see that it had fine classic lines and a deep mahogany finish. Carefully removing the rags and boxes, she was able to get a better idea of the condition of the instrument. There were several broken keys and the piano was in serious need of restoration. But the soundboard looked to be in good condition and the strings were intact. The key cover was scratched and could probably use a new hinge, but the music holder was intact and folded easily. A lift for one of the pedals was missing, but all three pedals were there. Yes, this was a great find, but only if she could afford it.

“Audrey,” she shouted out. “How much do you want for this old baby grand?”

“What? That old thing?” Audrey came scurrying around a corner. “I’ve had that for years. Never had the time or money to restore it. I got it when the 2nd Baptist Church closed its doors back in the ’80s. It takes up too much space and I would just love to see it gone. How about I let you have it for \$100 and you find a way to get it to where you want it to go.”

“Oh, I couldn’t, Audrey,” said Gayle. “It’s worth far more than that.”

“I know, Gayle. But in truth, I really just want it gone. No one buys these things anymore. Even when someone shows an interest, they want me to clean it up, pay for tuning, and deliver it to them in pristine condition. I’m just not in a position to do that. I’m sticking to that \$100 if you can pick it up and get it out of here by the end of the week.

“Well,” said Gayle, “if you insist. But I feel like I am robbing you.” Gayle pulled a \$100 bill out of her purse and gave it to Audrey. “I will have someone pick it up. Thank you so much.”

“No, thank you Gayle. I’m glad to see it gone.”

As soon as she left the store, Gayle called Frank, her trusted restoration specialist. “Frank, I have a job for you. I just found a great piano. I want you to pick it up and restore it for me. It needs a good deal of work.”

“As it happens, Gayle, I have some time on my hands. What do you have?

“It’s a mid-century Henry F. Miller baby grand piano, Frank. I would like for you to come get it in Parable, ASAP. Can you do that for me?”

“Well, that’s about an hour and a half away and I happen to be free this afternoon. I’ll leave now and come get it. Where’s it at?”

“Audrey’s Forgotten Treasures on 10th street. I appreciate it, Frank.”

Later that evening, Frank gave Gayle a call. “That truly is a wonderful find, Gayle, but you’re right, it’s going to take a lot of work. It’s an expensive job. Are you sure you want to do this?”

“Absolutely, Frank. Whatever it costs. And do it all, Frank. No short cuts. This piano is deserving of a new life, and I intend to make sure that happens.”

“Sure thing, Gayle. You know I don’t cut corners anyway. I will let you know when it’s done.”

Four months later, the restored Henry F. Miller parlor baby grand piano was sitting in Gayle’s den. It was perfect. Frank had done a wonderful job. Gayle had a small dinner party and invited George, the pianist at First Presbyterian, over to entertain the guests. They all agreed that the piano was a thing of beauty, a work of art, and sounded magnificent.

Gayle was glad that she had asked Frank to do the restoration rather than attempt it herself. There’s just something special about a master’s touch. She never regretted going all-in to bring new life to such a precious instrument. Frank’s dedication and skill were obvious. How precious it was to have that piano in her den for all to admire.

“Wonderful story, preacher,” I hear you thinking. “But what in the world does it have to do with Jesus washing the disciple’s feet? That’s what we are talking about today, isn’t it.” And yes, that is what we are talking about today, but like I have told you, we are looking at this Holy Season through the eyes of our brother Peter, the fisherman. We are seeing how a common, everyday person sees this whole foot-washing event. You would think that after all this time with Jesus, Peter would begin to realize how Jesus sees him. Yes, Peter was his disciple and his friend, but there is so much more going on here. Peter is still feeling unworthy. It’s like he can’t fathom why Jesus ever picked him to be a disciple in the first place. But maybe there is a nugget of wisdom here for all of us who understand we are unworthy to stand in the presence of God.

In our story today, Gayle and Audrey see that old piano through two different sets of eyes. Audrey sees it as an annoyance, something to be ignored until there might come a time when there would be no other choice than to send it to the trash heap. It’s in her way. She doesn’t think she will ever be able to sell it. It’s taking up too much room and she just wants it gone. Whereas Gayle sees the piano as the remarkable treasure that it will become after it is cleaned up and restored; when it once again is able to enrich the lives of the people who see it, play it, and hear it in all of its splendor. Audrey doesn’t want to hear that music. It might make her want to keep it around. But Gayle revels in the music that the piano will play after it is restored by a master’s hand, born again to lift people’s souls.

So, it is with Peter. He's so into seeing the world through his own eyes that he can't envision the world that Jesus is talking about. He sees his own life as dirty, incomplete, less than a commoner, a stinky fisherman. But Jesus sees Peter as the beautiful Apostle that he will become, a force that Jesus can use to help change the world. Whereas Peter sees his dirty feet and feels too unworthy to allow his teacher and friend to wash them, Jesus sees the potential of Peter through a transformation that can start with the washing of his feet.

Two different views of the world collide across that basin of water and a towel. When Jesus bends down to wash Peter's feet, Peter protests. Loudly. "Not gonna do it. Aint gonna to happen. I am not worthy of having you do this. I am nobody. I am less than dirt. You are Jesus and I am insignificant. I will not allow you to demean yourself this way. I cannot and will not let you do this! Not gonna Happen"

What we have here is a Mexican standoff, in a way. An impasse. Two forces of nature that refuse to compromise. But in reality here, the ball is in Peter's court and Jesus explains it to him this way. "Peter, my beloved friend and follower, the choice is yours. But I need you to understand that you either let me do this or it will be the end of our time together. We cannot move forward if you don't let me do this. You either understand that this is necessary, or you are free to leave me here and go back to catching fish. At this moment, I am teaching you that even the Son of Man must be a servant. And those who follow me must embrace my example. I will wash your feet at this moment. Tomorrow you will wash someone

else's feet. That is how it must be. It is how we are going to go about changing the world together."

Peter believes that he is being humble. When actually, his pride is getting in his way. He thinks that he is sparing Jesus the humility of washing his feet.

Because, if Peter allows this, then two things happen:

- 1. He will be allowing Jesus to place himself beneath Peter in an antiquated caste system that Jesus is determined to change.**
- 2. And the second thing is that the dirt and grime of Peter's life will now touch his Lord and Master, which is not how it is supposed to be.**

But folks, let's take that a little deeper. Isn't it true that we often hold Jesus at arm's length because we don't want our dirt to spill over to him. We don't want him to have to suffer under our sins and failures. We don't want him to come in contact with our filth. We have this super clean image of him that we have seen in paintings and in teaching. We believe that if we don't let him near us, he won't get dirty. We won't soil his robes. He will remain pure.

Jesus doesn't ask this of us lightly, but it is a most purifying moment. Jesus has to get dirty in order to clean us up. We have to be willing to share every speck of dirt and grime, not just the big mud patches, so that Christ can bring about the changes that are necessary to make us wholly his in Spirit and Truth. But he won't make us do it. He won't force us into this kind of relationship. But truly, if we are not willing to accept Jesus at this level and give ourselves wholly over to him, allow him to scrub us clean, then we truly aren't worthy of the

kingdom of heaven. We will remain unworthy by our own choice. If we are not willing to have our feet washed and learn the true meaning of servanthood, then there is always a path leading away from Jesus. And there are a great many people who would rather be dirty than to embrace the love, grace, and mercy of Jesus Christ. They feel that if they let Jesus wash their feet, then they will be expected to wash other people's feet, and well... they find that would be just nasty. Scut work. Something left to do for people that are the dregs of society. What they don't understand is that when we allow Jesus to wash our feet and choose to follow his example, we find ourselves wanting to wash the feet of other people. It becomes a humbling privilege for us. Is there anything more humbling than being relegated to scut work? Doing things that most people refuse to do, even if they are being paid for it.

But here we are with Peter. And once again he has chosen to speak out before he gains insight. He can't understand why his teacher and best friend is not only doing the lowliest of scut work, but seems to almost revel in it. And yes, Jesus is offering an example of how he expects his followers to behave. And when the light bulb finally goes off in Peter's soul and he understands what is being asked of him and why, he doesn't want to just comply. He wants to be all in. "Don't just wash my feet, master. Wash all of me. Clean me up completely. Don't leave a spot unwashed." Which is just the attitude that Jesus is looking for. He isn't requiring that Peter responds this way, and he lets Peter know that he appreciates his intentions. The fact that Peter has "seen the light" is enough to

make Jesus' heart leap. It's the epitome of the message that Christ has been trying to teach his disciples all along.

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

Matthew 5:38-42

Ding, ding, ding! Peter hit the jackpot as he finally grasps this concept. And please note that he is the only one of the twelve to get this. All the other disciples just went along with this whole foot washing thing, and they don't even question it. They must have allowed themselves to feel a bit self-righteous as they allowed Jesus to wash their feet without asking any questions or turning away, feeling somewhat worthy and proud. But Peter, in his quest to serve his master, speaks up and finds a path to understanding. When he realizes what Christ is trying to teach him, he embraces his new-found understanding and seeks to go above and beyond.

What about us? I know we are thankful when we realize how much God does in our lives to take care of us. I don't doubt that for a minute. The question remains however, do we just accept the fact that Jesus humbles himself to take care of us and we find ourselves satisfied with his grace and offer him a simple thank you. Or are we willing to engage with Jesus at the level that he is exemplifying for us. To take the lesson deeper and understand that he expects us to take care of others in the same way, without judgement, without discrimination, setting our personal feelings aside as we meet the needs of those around us, even when we might not know them or their story?

This week, I would like for us all to take this lesson to heart in our lives. Are we refusing to let Jesus wash our feet? And if we do let him wash our feet, are we content with just saying thank you? Or all we willing to go all-in like Peter and grasp the example that Christ sets by offering up all of ourselves for his service, not just our feet? The blessing is in the relationship we have with Christ and the ability to grasp what that actually means. When we offer to let Christ wash the dirtiest parts of us, that is a great step forward. But true understanding only comes when we engage with Jesus at a level where we offer up every part of ourselves for his cleansing and give ourselves wholly over to his service by lifting up God's children and washing their feet as well.

God bless you all,

AMEN

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