

## Title Slide #1 – Maundy Thursday

### Slide #2

#### THE SERVANT LEADER

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

*(Maundy Thursday)*

### Slide #3

Actress Mae West produced many memorable quotes, some of them quite naughty. But the one that seems to crystalize her celebrity attitude is **(Click)** “I never loved another person the way I loved myself.”

Just the opposite is that of **(Click)** Tom Selleck who seems to have avoided the Hollywood self-worship. He says that whenever he gets full of himself, he remembers the nice, elderly couple who approached him with a camera on a street in Honolulu one day. When he struck a pose for them, the man said, **(Click)** “No, no, we want you to take a picture of us.”

The truth of the matter is that many people **(Click)** consider a big ego to be prerequisite for success in today’s world. Without a big ego, we are told it is almost impossible to become a celebrity in our star-struck society.

### Slide #4

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew his time with his disciples was drawing to a close. They were enjoying the meal that has become known as the Last Supper, the final meal they would share together before his crucifixion. Judas had already set into motion the events that would bring about his death. How could the Master impress upon his disciples what he needed from them? How could he get across to them what his kingdom was really all about?

### Slide #5

Welcome to this Maundy Thursday celebration. I suspect that many of us have been coming to this service for years without having any idea where the word “Maundy” comes from. **(Click)** Maundy comes from the Latin word “mandatum,” which means “commandment.” This day is called Maundy Thursday because at the end of this scene at the Last Supper, **(Click)** Jesus gave us a new commandment. In verses 34 and 35 we read this commandment, “A new command I give you: Love one another. Jesus give that command two qualifiers: , **(Click)** As I have loved you, so you must love

one another. , **(Click)** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

### **Slide #6**

But to really get that message through to His disciples, **(Click)** just saying it was not going to do. So, **(Click)** Jesus demonstrated how this new commandment was to be lived out. John tells us that while the meal was still in progress, Jesus stood up, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After he poured water into a basin, He began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. This, quite obviously, was the last thing the disciples were expecting.

This was especially apparent when Jesus knelt to wash **(Click)** Peter’s feet. He said, “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.” The Master answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but wash my hands and my head as well!” That is *SO* Simon Peter!

### **Slide #7**

When Jesus had finished washing their feet, including the feet of Judas who would betray him, Jesus put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. **(Click)** “You call me ‘Teacher’ 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. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, and no messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

### **Slide #8**

What an amazing story this is. A little background might be helpful. The washing of feet was **(Click)** part of the rite of hospitality people in this part of the world offered their guests. **(Click)** Usually it was done by a servant. Why? **(Click)** It was not a pleasant task. In that part of the world people went barefoot or they wore sandals. Not only were the streets dusty and dirty, but they usually contained garbage and the waste from the animals that traveled up and down the same streets. And so the task of washing the feet of guests was usually relegated to the person of the lowest rank. Since none of the disciples felt they fit that description they all had come to the meal with unwashed

feet.

### **Slide #9**

Also, remember, **(Click)** they didn't sit on chairs around a table as we do for our meals. **(Click)** Rather they reclined on the floor with the food spread out before them. **(Click)** Imagine the scene in your mind. They were reclining on the floor in a circle. That meant you were on the same level as all those stinky feet--**(Click)** not the most appetizing way to consume a meal. The rite of washing feet was therefore essential.

### **Slide #10**

The problem was that each of the disciples felt they were too good to perform this ritual. **(Click)** Remember, only a little while ago they had argued about who among them was the greatest (Luke 22:24). **(Click)** Do you think any of them would offer to wash feet? **(Click)** No Way! Instead of serving one another, the disciples were jealous of one another and were competing for the best place. **(Click)** As someone has put it, "They were ready to fight for a throne, but not for a towel." (1)

How could the master teach them that greatness comes through service? How could he teach them that it is in laying down your life that you will find it? **(Click)** He did it with this astounding object lesson. He took off his outer garments, wrapped a towel around his waist and began washing his disciples' feet. The Lord of the whole universe humbled himself before his disciples and took on the role of the humblest servant. What an example he gave his disciples. What an example he gave to us.

### **Slide #11**

Gene Wilkes, in his book, *Jesus on Leadership*, writes these very meaningful words: "Jesus did not come to gain a place of power. He did not come to defeat his human enemies. He did not come to overthrow an unjust government. **(Click)** Jesus came to show us the heart of God. His entire message and ministry on earth was to show selfish, power-hungry people like you and me what love looks like. As he knelt before Judas, Jesus showed us a love that no human can conceive on his own: a love that is brutally honest about what is going on but still kneels before us to lay down his life so we can be free from the sin that infects us. **(Click)** Jesus loves you as he loved Judas. If you miss that, you have missed eternal life." (2)

The love that led Jesus to kneel down and wash his disciples' feet is beyond our comprehension. We don't see many examples of this kind of servanthood today. Indeed, there are many who believe that choosing to be a servant is for losers. Arrogance and

aggressiveness are the attitudes that strut down most corridors of power. But not always.

### **Slide #12**

One of the greatest examples of servanthood was a young Albanian girl named Agnes. At the age of 18 Agnes gave in to the tugging on her heart that she had felt for many years and became a nun.

When she announced her intention to enter a convent to her brother who was a soldier, he reacted with disbelief because his sister was such a vivacious young woman. Agnes had the perfect answer for him. She replied that he was proud as a soldier to be serving a king who ruled over a few million subjects. She, on the other hand, would be serving the King of the entire world. Agnes entered a convent where she remained for 17 years.

In 1948, after 17 years living this cloistered life, Agnes decided to walk away from the convent taking nothing with her except three Saris to go over her white habit. She left the convent and went into the street to serve the least and the lowest. She had no building for her ministry. She had to beg for money to support what she was doing. She said she was called to care for the sick, the poor, the dying, and the dispossessed, to show them the love that God had for them. She spent the rest of her life picking up dying people off the street and carrying them to shelter. She cleaned infected wounds, lovingly washing and providing basic care for people on the verge of death. And she did it all with a beautiful smile. **THE REST OF THE STORY:** We know Agnes, of course **(Click)** as Mother Teresa, a true saint of God and one of the great people of the twentieth century.

### **Slide #13**

I love the way Ruth Harms Calkin put it in a poem, titled *I Wonder*:  
You know, Lord, How I serve You; with great emotional fervor in the limelight.  
You know how eagerly I speak for You at a Women's Club.  
You know my genuine enthusiasm at a Bible study.

### **Slide #14**

But how would I react, I wonder, if You pointed to a basin of water and asked me to wash the calloused feet of a bent and wrinkled old woman day after day, month after month, in a room where nobody saw and nobody knew? (3)

## Slide #15

Does that challenge you? It does me. Maundy Thursday is that day in the church year when we most often remember the **(Click)** Lord's Supper, a great and wonderful sacrament to be sure. But we do the Lord's Supper an injustice if we forget that also on this night **(Click)** Jesus gave us a new command: Love one another . . .”

The bread and the wine are important to us as followers of Christ. But so are the towel and the basin. Christ has called us to a life of serving others and He adds, **(Click)** “That's how the world will know that we are his followers.

**(Move from the pulpit to the middle of altar area)**

## Slide #16

For our Lord's Supper tonight each will serve another. **(Click)** Find a partner, husband, wife, friend or even stranger and ask them if they would be willing to server you the Lord's Supper? When it comes time for the meal, I will place the bread and the wine on this little table here in front. **(Click)** You and your partner will come forward, help yourself to the elements and offer them to each other. I will direct you with the words “the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ” as you commune each other. I want you to be aware that by doing so in this manner, **(Click)** you are saying, “I am offering myself in loving service to you.” Amen.

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1. Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), p. 199.

2. (Lifeway Press, 1998), p. 168.

3. *Biblical Illustrator*.