

“No, I can’t have my feet washed. I’m in the choir.”

That was my excuse. The old pastor had moved on, and the associate pastor was filling in until someone was appointed. I had a real affection for the old pastor. He was a spiritual father to me. I looked up to him, and I admired him. The associate pastor and I had never hit it off. In my eyes, the associate pastor was a jerk.

Unfortunately, that excuse didn’t fly. I didn’t know it, but the twelve people who were having their feet washed on Holy Thursday were all from the choir. There was no backing out of it. I had never done this before, and really didn’t want to do something so personal ... so intimate ... with that ‘jerk.’

So, I covered over how I felt by cracking jokes. “I haven’t washed my feet in a week,” I’d say when asked about my role for Holy Thursday. I tried not to think about it. Easter wasn’t going to be the same. The old pastor wasn’t around anymore. I missed him, a lot.

Then it was Holy Thursday. And when the time came to for the footwashing, I went forward, and sat on the steps with the other people. I watched as their feet were washed, and I laughed inside at my jokes of the past week. Did they wash their feet beforehand?

Then, Father came to me, and I looked away. Looked away? Why did I look away?

But, then something came over me. It was like a car crash. I had to look. And when I did, I saw the man whom I thought was a jerk wash my foot. Then he dried it with a towel. And then he kissed it.

And in that moment, he wasn’t the ‘jerk.’ He wasn’t a man. Something was different. Really different. At that moment, he was Christ. I saw in him the person of Christ in so vivid an image that I still choke up when I think of it. And in that moment, I realized that *I* was the jerk. I was ashamed of myself. That’s why I looked away. I wanted to cry.

How often do we let who we are get in the way of love? Or how often do we let who other people are get in the way of love?

You see, Jesus comes to us in the least of our ‘brothers.’ This doesn’t always mean that Jesus is in the poorest, or the simplest, or even the smallest. What this means is that Jesus comes to us in the person we least expect.

How often do we let how we feel get in the way of loving? How often do we get in the way of Jesus’ loving us? How often do we get in the way of us loving Jesus?

Jesus comes to us in ways that we least expect. Jesus comes to us in the people we least expect. And when we choose to love one and not the other, well, that’s when we get in the way. When we refuse to love someone because of who we are, or who they are, or how we feel about them, or how they feel about us ... when we get in the way of serving others by sharing Jesus’ love – that’s when we become jerks.

That day, when I sat in judgment of the associate pastor – I betrayed Jesus by failing to show the love that Jesus showed me. I denied Jesus by denying His love to another person. Love each other. Don’t be a jerk. Love each other.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.” Jesus has given us the example of love. Let’s not get in the way. Let’s choose to love like Jesus loves us. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.”