

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the Tenth Chapter:

“They came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to shout, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many scolded him to get him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him.’ So they called the blind man and said to him, ‘Have courage! Get up! He is calling you.’ He threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ The blind man replied, ‘Rabbi, let me see again.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go, your faith has healed you.’ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the road.”

The Gospel of Our Lord.

Reformation Sunday 2011
Steppin' Out
Mark 10:46-52

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work. I give you my feet to go your way. I give you my eyes to see as you do. I give you my tongue to speak your words. I give you my mind that you may think in me. I give you my spirit that you may pray in me. Above all, I give you my heart that you may love in me . . . I give you my whole self that you may grow in me, so that it is you, Lord Jesus, who live and work and pray in me.” (Lancelot Andrewes.).

“I give you my feet to go your way.”

In some of the most beautiful poetry in the Bible, the prophet Isaiah sings about “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”

“How beautiful. . . are the feet. . . .”

Most of us probably don't think of our feet as among the most beautiful members of our bodies.

I've washed some of your feet on Maundy Thursday, and I know it's true, your feet have taken a real beating with all those corns and callouses, those bunions and bruises.

So, with any luck, maybe Johnathan, or Rachel, or Sara will study one day to be a podiatrist, so that he or she can help you take care of those tired, aching, not-so-beautiful feet of yours.

Remember, one of the promises our confirmands are about to make this day is “to serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus.”

Remember his example.

“So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example. . . .”

There’s nothing especially beautiful about feet, except when you think about the way they move.

Think about feet that dance, like Danielle’s.

Think about feet that skate, like Kate’s

Think about feet that run to the rescue, like Don’s or Joshua’s.

Then, think about feet that can volley a soccer ball, like Rachel’s; or other feet moving in the stirrups of a saddle, like Sara’s; or yet other feet rushing to fill-in as an acolyte at the Lord’s Table, like Johnathan’s.

Take another look at those feet.

Get them on the move, get them *steppin' out*, and those smelly feet of ours become “Oh, how beautiful. . . how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”

The Apostle Paul seems to share Isaiah’s affection for feet when he quotes that prophet in Romans 10: “But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

You might expect Paul to say, “How beautiful are the *words* of those who bring good news”; “How beautiful are the *mouths* . . .”; “How beautiful are the *voices*. . .”; “How beautiful are the *faces*. . .”; “How beautiful are the *teeth*. . .”; “How beautiful are the *accomplishments*. . .”; “How beautiful are the *clothes*. . .”

But no, “How beautiful are your *feet*.”

“The members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,” Paul writes to the Corinthians, “and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor . . . But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member. . . .”

You see, before we can open our mouths to *speak* some good news from God, we have to use our feet to

bring good news to those who need to hear it.

We have to use our feet to *bring* the good news to a hospital room; or to enter the chapel of a funeral home; or to pray with a soldier on the battlefield; or to go across the street to visit a sick neighbor; or to find a troubled adolescent at midnight; or to feed a hungry child; or to comfort a friend sobbing in the hallway at school.

You have to move your feet.

You have to be steppin' out.

You need “to serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus.”

Nothing bears the beauty of feet that bring the bodies of “those who bear good news” to others.

In antiquity during the days before text-messages and emails, telephones and televisions, even the postal service and the pony express, messages and news were carried across land by runners. Remember the messenger who died after running from Marathon in Greece to Athens?

The long-distance run called the “marathon” comes from the legend of Pheidippides, a Greek runner, who was sent to announce that the Persians had been miraculously defeated in the Battle of Marathon. It is said that he ran the entire distance without stopping, but moments after proclaiming his message, he collapsed from exhaustion.

Imagine the beauty of Pheidippides feet as he ran across the countryside with the “good news.”

Maybe you’ve never thought about it, but I think one of

the most beautiful moments in our worship service is when people slowly move their feet toward the Lord's Supper—beautiful because those feet bring our bodies into communion with the body of Christ and with one another at his Supper.

“How beautiful. . . are those feet of yours. . . .”

At first, we think the story of Blind Bartimaeus is about his eyes, but the more I listen to this episode, the more I think it is about the man's feet.

It had evidently been a long time since Bartimaeus had seen the sun rise, or gazed into the face of his children, or been able to support himself by the labor of his hands.

He was “a blind beggar sitting by the road.”

Among Martin Luther's final words, as he was dying,

were these: “Beggars all are we, this is true.”

Here is a blind beggar who could easily have been overlooked by Jesus.

“But Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him.’”

“So they called the blind man and said to him, ‘Have courage! Get up! He’s is calling you.’”

“And the blind man threw off his cloak, JUMPED UP, and came to Jesus.”

He “jumped up.” Maybe like you kids used to do on the trampoline in the backyard, or the beds at home, or on each other when you were small, much to the displeasure of your parents.

“How beautiful are the feet.”

How beautiful are those feet “jumping up,” steppin’ out,

and following Jesus.

In the early days of the Church, baptism was often understood as illumination, the opening of the eyes of faith.

You might say that this story is about the baptism of Bartimaeus.

Not only are the eyes of this man opened, but the eyes of his faith are illumined. And because the eyes of faith are opened, the feet begin to move behind Jesus.

And his name is Bartimaeus, "Son of Honor."

Some kids your age are called "Bar Mizvah," or "Bat Mitzvah," "Sons or Daughters of the Law."

Dear Johnathan, dear Rachel, dear Sara, "Have courage! Get up! He's is calling you."

You are "Bar Timaeus," "Children of Honor."

Fourteen or fifteen years ago, when you were baptized, somebody had the courage to get up and bring you to Jesus because they heard him calling you.

And, even though water was poured on your heads, it was also poured on your feet, and on your hands, and on every part of you.

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?” Paul asks, “. . . Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.”

A few weeks ago, when Rowen Lee was baptized, we heard again that, in baptism, we have been given the name “Christ,” “Christened,” baptized, made “daughters and sons

of honor.”

The world has a way of telling you that you’re “nobody,” that you need to prove that you’re “somebody” by being more popular, richer, smarter, bigger, slimmer or stronger than anybody else.

Don’t let anybody tell you that.

Don’t let anybody tell you that you’re “nobody.”

You are already sons and daughters of honor, beloved in the heart of the only One who counts, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of lords, the King of kings.

You are sons and daughters of honor who live to the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For Martin Luther there was nothing that mattered more in life than his baptism into Christ. He recounts that

whenever the devil assailed him, whenever he was beaten down, whenever he felt lost in the abyss of life, he would answer, “But I am baptized! . . . And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body . . .”

“No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than Baptism,” he said, “for through it we obtain perfect holiness and salvation, which no other kind of life and no work on earth can acquire.”

Today, Sara, Rachel, Johnathan, we’re not really interested in how much you know; so, we don’t need to give you a public examination in front of the whole congregation the way they used to do in the old days.

We’re mostly interested in how you will use your feet

with us to follow Jesus.

For a long time now, your parents and families have been using their feet, first to bring you to baptism, and then to worship services, and then to Sunday school, and then to confirmation classes. And they're going to keep on walking with you.

Your families' feet are beautiful!

Throughout these years, your mom's and dad's, your families and relatives, and your Mother the Church, through this congregation, your brothers and sisters in Christ, have been calling to you, "Have courage! Get up! Jesus is calling you."

"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."

So, today, the church asks whether or not you intend to use those feet of yours—to jump up, *to step out*, and to follow Jesus by the power of his Holy Spirit who walks right next to you.

“Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in Holy Baptism: to live among God’s faithful people, to hear his Word and share in his supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?”

And, with us, you will answer, “I do, and I ask God to help and guide me . . . and I ask God to help and guide me.”

And so we pray, “Open my eyes, that I may see

glimpses of truth Thou hast for me; place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free. Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see. Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!" (Clara H. Scott).