

Do you ever feel like you just really don't understand what is going on? I have had that feeling too.

I came across a delightful story of what can happen, when we don't understand what is going on. A priest was being honored at his retirement dinner after 25 years serving the parish.

A leading local politician and member of the congregation was chosen to make the presentation and give a little speech at the dinner. He was late getting there, so the priest decided to say his own few words while they waited.

"I got my first impression of the parish from the very first confession I heard here. I thought I had been assigned to a terrible place. The very first person who entered my confessional told me he had stolen a television set and, when questioned by the police, was able to lie his way out of it. He had stolen money from his parents, embezzled from his employer, had an affair with his boss's wife; and taken illegal drugs. I was appalled. But as the days went on I knew that our people were not all like that and I had, indeed, come to a fine parish full of good and loving people."

Just as the priest finished his talk, the politician arrived full of apologies at being late. He immediately began to make the presentation and gave his talk. "I'll never forget the first day our parish priest arrived," said the politician. "In fact, I had the honor of being the very first person to go to him for confession."

The poor politician, he didn't understand what was going on. Maybe this story reminds us to not be late for a gathering. I loved it. Do you ever feel like you don't really understand what is going on?

Many of us have felt that way. So often, we really can't tell what is going on until after an event is over, and we have time to reflect on the significance of what is happening. In our scripture for

today, we meet Peter. He doesn't understand much at all of the events unfolding around him.

Jesus and the disciples are gathered together in the upper room for a meal. As it turns out, it will be their last one with Jesus before his death. We know that. But they don't. Jesus knows that, but they don't.

So Jesus wants to make a point. He gets up at the appropriate time. He places a towel around himself. He gathers a basin of water. And he does an astonishing thing for his culture. He voluntarily moves himself from the highest position in the room, to the lowest as he begins to wash the feet of his disciples.

You see, it was the role of the youngest or the servant, to wash the feet of the guests in the house. Jesus, purposely, stepped down, into that role of service.

The disciples were shocked to see it. The disciples were shocked to experience it. Peter gives voice to what all of the disciples felt, "What are you doing Master? Are you going to wash my feet?"

"Yes, Peter, I am. You may not understand what I am doing here. But it will be clear later."

"No," Peter said. "You are NEVER going to wash my feet."

"Agh," said Jesus. "If I don't do this, you really aren't a part of what I am doing. You aren't with me, if you don't let me lead you."

This time Peter says, "Look, I AM with you. You can wash all of me. That is how much I am with you."

Jesus must have just looked at Peter, shook his head and said, "You really don't get it, Peter. You are already clean. You don't need a bath. I only need to wash your feet." Peter didn't get it. So often, neither do we. *Peter didn't get it, that we are called by God to live serving God, by serving others.*

Our mission statement for our church reminds us that *The mission of Sun Prairie United Methodist Church is to invite and welcome people to be committed and compassionate followers of Jesus Christ through worship, through spiritual growth, through fellowship, through service to others.*

In our culture, we especially have a hard time with this one. We are not really good at serving others. When was the last time you did something in service to others in the name of God?

**Why should we be committed to service?** Because it is a way in which people can experience the love of God through us. That is a part of what Jesus was trying to show us so long ago.

We have been touched by God's love, so we can share that love with other people. If we have received it as a gift, then we can give it as a gift. Because God's love comes to us on its way to other people. If we hold on to it and keep it as a possession, it withers and dies. But if we share it, it grows and flourishes.

In Korea, Dr. Paul Cho is the pastor of the largest Christian Church in the world. This church is based on small groups that meet all around Seoul. These small groups do several things. They pray together. They read scripture together. They comfort each other and have fellowship together. They are involved in a mission together. Each group does one mission a year.

One of the groups decided for their mission, to once a week clean the store of a friend of theirs who was not a Christian. They

decided to clean this store once a week for a whole year as a way to show the love of God to this friend in a practical way.

At first, the store owner thought it was a nice novelty. He agreed to let them come and clean his store for one year. After about a month of people coming to clean his store, he started to get curious. "Why are you doing this? I thought you would get tired and stop coming."

Each time they questioned him they simply said, "Look my friend. We care about you. This is one way we can share with you the love of God that we have freely received."

They were clear about why they were serving. It was to show God's love. Do you think it made an impact on that man?

It did. Within a couple of months, he started coming to their group. He discovered that they were praying for him already. Within a short time after coming to that small group, where he experienced a safe place to ask his questions of faith and be supported, he asked Jesus into his life and he started attending that church.

All because some people like you and me, average, ordinary, everyday followers of Jesus Christ, sought to live faithfully to the call of Jesus, to serve God by serving other people. That is what we are called to do. That is how we show God's love to the world around us.

May God help each one of us, live as servants of Jesus Christ.

Amen