

FOOT NOTE

A monologue in which Peter reflects on the events of the Last Supper.

Bible References: John 13:1-17; Luke 22:24-30

Performance notes: This monologue is quite long, so allow plenty of time to practise it to ensure a smooth delivery.

It might add some interest if Peter delivers his monologue lying down reclining on one side against a cushion, as if at a Jewish meal table.

Foot note

Written by Dan Elson

Peter

What do you think of when you hear the word Passover?

Until that day, all I thought of was feasting, fellowship and wine. I saw Passover simply as a time when everyone came together to eat, drink and enjoy the company of friends, many of whom we hadn't seen for some time.

But this year was different. Instead of gathering with close family and distant relatives, I joined with Jesus and my fellow followers.

As we came to the upper room where we were to have our meal, he motioned for us to sit and get comfortable at the table. He walked over to the corner where a bowl of water stood and put on a servant's apron. Then he picked up the bowl, made his way to the table and stopped at James's feet.

James watched him, slightly on edge, and you almost saw him flinch as Jesus knelt down and started to remove his sandals. Everyone chuckled. You could see they were uneasy. This wasn't a job for the master – it wasn't even a job for the youngest in the family. This was a task for servants!

At first, we weren't sure if he was just making a point to James.

Only a few hours earlier, some of us had been arguing about who was the greatest, and James, as always, had been the most vocal, confident that he'd be the one in the seat of honour when Jesus came in glory.

But it soon became clear that this was no joke or private lesson, because Jesus continued moving around the table, quietly going about his business, removing each follower's sandals in turn before washing their feet.

A couple of the others started chatting, no doubt trying to hide their embarrassment. I thought we should have protested, but Jesus was so involved in the task he hardly seemed to notice us.

Peter

He took care and attention in his work. He found every speck of dirt and rinsed it away. He carefully dried each foot with his apron, making sure to be gentle and thorough. All the time, his eyes were fixed on the task, and everyone sheepishly did as they felt they ought to.

But when Jesus reached to untie my sandals, I couldn't hold back.

'What are you doing, Master?' I asked. 'Why should you wash my feet?'

Not only shouldn't he have been the one washing our dirty feet, like a servant, but of all of us he should have been the first to be washed. He should have been seated there at the head of the table, the place of honour. He should have been explaining the Passover to us and leading us in the Psalms.

'Lord, you're not going to wash my feet – not ever!' I told him.

The words came out louder than I'd meant them to, but he wasn't startled, and – as always – he seemed to have anticipated what I was going to say.

He said, with a shrug, 'If I don't wash you, you can't be part of what I'm doing.'

That seemed a bit cryptic, but there was no way on earth I was going to give up following him now, so I blurted out, 'Well, don't just wash my feet, then – wash my hands and my head too!'

He looked up from the work he was doing. 'You had a bath this morning, Peter,' he said, 'so you only need your feet re-washed to be clean from head to toe. My concern, you understand, isn't hygiene, but holiness.' Then, as he finished, he added, 'So now you're clean.'

I glanced across at my fellow followers. Most sat quietly, awkwardly, waiting.

Peter

After he'd replaced the bowl and apron and joined us at the table, he could see that we were confused.

'You address me as "Teacher" and "Master"; he said, 'and you're right to do that. So if I, the Master and Teacher, have washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've laid down a pattern for you. What I've done, you do. If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it – and live a blessed life.'

Well, we all carried on and had our Passover feast. Andrew and John quickly got back into the swing of things – eating and drinking and laughing – while others, like me, took longer to snap out of it and get back into the party mood. Judas didn't seem to cheer up at all.

But despite our individual responses, that moment affected us all. In the space of a day, we had gone from arguing about who was the most important to being shown that the ultimate goal was to choose to become the least important.

If Jesus, the Son of the living God, could play servant to us, then surely we could no longer have any delusions of grandeur. As he had taught us: 'Now, you must wash each other's feet.'