

## Beautiful feet

By [Rachael Keefe](#)

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Many years ago while I was serving my first church as associate pastor, I horrified two elderly women one afternoon. It was a late summer or early fall day, and I happened to be the only one in the office when these ladies stopped by. I went to open the door, and they noticed my bare feet. My shoes were tucked under my desk where they were most of the time I was in the office. I hadn't given a thought to slipping them on before I answered the door. These women took one look at my feet and expressed their disapproval. It apparently was not appropriate for a pastor to be barefoot in the church.

Without hesitating, I said, "Oh, I think you might be wrong about that." They looked at me with raised eyebrows waiting to see what I was going to say. They had previously expressed concerns about having a woman who was "so young" and now here I was telling them they were wrong. "It's biblical to be barefoot in church, you see ... " They didn't think so. "God told Moses to take off his shoes for he was standing on holy ground. Aren't we standing on holy ground?"

They gave me an odd look but said no more. The next Sunday as I was walking down the aisle during the closing hymn, I saw these women in their back pew seats grinning at me. I looked down at their feet, and, yes, they were barefoot. And my relationship with them was much improved from that moment on.

I think of these women whenever I read the passage about Moses and his bare feet or the passage in Isaiah that describes the "beautiful feet" of the one "who brings good news." That day was a turning point in my ministry at that church, so it made those old, travel-worn feet beautiful. However, I don't usually find feet beautiful, and I'm not sure that we think every messenger who announces peace, good news, or salvation is very attractive at all. [If James and John are any indication](#), we miss the announcement and don't even recognize the messenger or the message, let alone his or her feet.

They were focused on glory. Something, and I don't know what exactly, gave them the idea that Jesus would live on in amazing glory. They wanted to be close to him, to share his glory more fully than any others. They missed the announcement of peace, good news, and salvation. They were heading right for the fun part. Skip the trial and suffering, and let's just go to that brilliant power they'd seen at the moment of transfiguration. Never mind all that stuff Jesus was saying about leaving family, selling everything, radically changing their lives. Let's just grab hold of the glory because that's the good part.

Jesus was having none of that. Will you drink from my cup? Will you share in my baptism? I can only imagine the genuine look of confusion on the faces of James and John. I see it on my own face often enough. No. No, I don't want to drink from that cup that offers liberation, healing, grace, salvation, and so much more to everyone. I'd rather just focus on my own two feet, thank you very much. And no, I don't want to share in that baptism that cracks open the skies and demands the receiving and giving of limitless, steadfast love in exchange. No, thank you very much. You keep the hard stuff and hand me the glory, OK?

That's not the way it works, though. We are called to be a servant people in service to the whole of creation. It isn't about who sits closest to Jesus in heaven or who gets to the pearly gates with clean feet. It's about offering the cup that overflows with mercy and grace to those who are so very thirsty. You know the ones. They are the refugees, the undocumented workers, those who are mentally ill, those who can't afford healthy food, those who can't access health care, those experiencing homelessness, and all the others who challenge our comfortable, complacent lives. It's also about living in that baptism of the Holy Spirit that enables us to embody love for all of God's beloved.

Simply announcing peace, good news, and salvation is not enough. Our feet must become tired, sore, and a little bruised with the living out of the message. We're supposed to show up and be in solidarity with those who suffer and are pushed to the margins. Beautiful feet are not the pretty, neatly manicured ones. Beautiful feet are the old, travel-worn feet that tell a story of a life lived stumbling along the way of peace while trying to bring good news and salvation to those in the most need.

Glory is easy enough, but it is really insufficient for the journey and it doesn't serve anyone. Isn't it time we stop thinking about ourselves and start serving those most in need? Your feet won't have to take you far to find someone in need of a sip from

that cup or a touch of that baptism. And, by the way, in case you forget like I so often do, those feet tucked neatly in your shoes or barefoot under your desk, those feet are Christ's feet. Use them well.

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