

**August 21, 2022**  
**Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost**

**Meditation: "Look Out!"**

Have you ever noticed peoples' feet? I have made a study of them, and let me tell you, there is a lot you can tell about people by looking at their feet.

There are the feet of the Roman soldiers, in their high sandals; sandals that are almost completely closed in, to protect the feet during battle and during those long marches; sandals that have heavy soles to last through those long marches; and they hurt feet that would as soon stand on your neck while a blade pierces you through, as ignore you altogether. It makes you shiver.

There are the feet of the wealthy, enrobed in elegant sandals of the finest leather. Feet, soft feet, clean feet, with nails that are neatly trimmed and polished. They are proud and arrogant feet.

There are the feet of the very poor; bare feet, dry and dirty and heavily calloused. Sometimes they are so dry that they are cracked and bleeding, causing them to be caked in blood and dirt. They are feet that are tired and, pardon the pun, defeated looking.

Beautiful, it is said, are the feet of those who bring good news, but I wouldn't know, for I have never seen such feet, and long have I searched for them. Eighteen years I have searched for such feet, ever since I became bent over and crippled. It has been so long, that I can't even remember exactly when or how or why I am crippled. It ceased to matter. But one thing I know; is that, while my bondage may be visible, each of us is crippled by something, whether it is visible or not. It may be abject poverty, or pride, or expectations we have of life, or of ourselves, or of how others will behave, or you name it, but every one of us is bound by something.

Even Jeremiah was bound. God called him to be his messenger, to speak for him, and Jeremiah protested. He wasn't old enough or wise enough to speak for God, he said. He was right, he wasn't old enough or wise enough to speak for God on his own. None of us ever will be old enough or wise enough to speak *for* God, but *with* God all things are possible. I wonder how Jeremiah's feet looked; to some he carried good news, planting seeds of hope, building up confidence, but to others he carried words of warning and of condemnation and of destruction.

Being bent over comes with its challenges. Mostly what I see is, well, me. My own feet to be specific. It's hard to see much else, and that is a hazard. You see, I'm constantly bumping into people and things because it's difficult to see where I am going. I can't see what others see. My perspective is different. The world prescribed by my vision is very small.

## ***LOOK OUT!***

Exactly!

Another thing I know. This thing that has crippled me has also sucked the life out of me. I no longer live, but survive from day to day, and the same is true for all of you who are bound by something; you are not truly alive, but only survive from day to day. Oh, that I could find those feet.

It's them. It's those beautiful feet. They are the most beautiful feet I have ever seen. They are not closed off and indifferent like the feet of the Roman soldiers. They are not the proud arrogant feet of the wealthy. They are not the dry, cracked and dirty bare feet of the very poor. They are feet shod in simple sandals; feet dusty from the road, but they stand there, steadfast, with purpose and with promise.

What's that? You release me from my ailment? I can stand! I feel whole! I feel alive again! Blessed be your holy name, Lord!

What's that? You call me like you called Jeremiah? You want me to tell the world about your grace shown to me? Consider it done.

This story is not simply a story about an unnamed woman two thousand years ago. It is also a story about us today. It is not simply a story of an individual. It is also a story that applies to us as a congregation, a denomination, even as the wider body of Christ. Sometimes congregations are bent over double by fear: fear of change; fear of the future. Recent figures show that the United Church is now closing churches as fast as we were opening churches in the 50s and 60s. None of us want to be the ones on watch when our church closes. We allow those fears to cripple us, to bend us over double.

Vaclav Havel notwithstanding, fear is the opposite of faith. Our fears limit our vision. They limit our imagination. We wind up seeing only our own feet. We don't see what is around us. We don't see possibilities or opportunities or callings. We can't see what is coming in the future. We only see the immediate. If we want the church to grow and thrive we need to stop looking at our feet, stand up straight and look out. Look out at the community that surrounds us. Look out at the future. Look out and not in.

People, do you not know it? The Lord walks with you, every moment of every day, and waits for you to recognize what binds you, cripples you, sucks the life out of you, and when you do, ask God, and you too will be set free. Blessed be the name of the Lord! May your feet, our feet become beautiful feet, bringing good news to those in need. Amen.