

**Christ Church, Ipswich**  
*Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022*  
**Worship for the Fifth Sunday of Lent**  
*with Holy Communion*

Hello. I hope all is well. Next week, we look forward to joining with our friends at St Mary-le-Tower for Palm Sunday worship, starting at 10.30 am in the Town Centre Square. This Sunday, we have an opportunity to celebrate Holy Communion together. If you'd like to participate, may I encourage you to prepare some bread and wine (or something as similar as possible) ready for this part of our worship. This morning, on this the Fifth Sunday of Lent, our Bible readings are Isaiah 43:16-21, Philippians 3:4b-14 and John 12:1-8, where Mary anoints the feet of Jesus at Bethany. Let us worship God together:

**A prayer of approach**

Giving God,  
 no money can buy your love,  
 no words can adequately express our thanks,  
 no actions can fully demonstrate our gratitude.  
 But as we sing, as we pray, as we listen to your Word,  
 we offer you our best,  
 and celebrate your presence with us –  
 now and each moment of every day. **Amen.**

**Psalm 26**

<sup>1</sup> When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
 we were like those who dream.

<sup>2</sup> **Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
 and our tongue with shouts of joy;**

then it was said among the nations,  
 'The Lord has done great things for them.'

<sup>3</sup> **The Lord has done great things for us,  
 and we rejoiced.**

<sup>5</sup> May those who sow in tears  
 reap with shouts of joy.

<sup>6</sup> **Those who go out weeping,  
 bearing the seed for sowing,  
 shall come home with shouts of joy.**

**R&S 72 Now thank we all our God**

1 Now thank we all our God,  
 with hearts and hands and voices;  
 who wondrous things has done,  
 in whom his world rejoices;  
 who from our mother's arms  
 has blessed us on our way  
 with countless gifts of love,  
 and still is ours today.

2 O may this bounteous God  
 through all our life be near us,  
 with ever joyful hearts  
 and blessed peace to cheer us;  
 and keep us in his grace,  
 and guide us when perplexed,  
 and free us from all ills  
 in this world and the next.

3 All praise and thanks to God  
 the Father now be given,  
 the Son, and him who reigns  
 with them in highest heaven,  
 the one eternal God,  
 whom earth and heaven adore;  
 for thus it was, is now,  
 and shall be ever more.

Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)

### **A prayer of adoration**

Creator God, loving Saviour, living Spirit,  
 we celebrate your generosity  
 in receiving all that we would give you.  
 We rejoice in your generosity  
 as you pour out your blessing on all you have made.  
 We commit ourselves to reflecting your generosity in our lives,  
 by giving the best of all we have and are wherever there is need. **Amen.**

### **A prayer of confession**

Please, forgive us, faithful God,  
 when we fill the rooms we enter with negativity, not warmth.

**Forgive us, and bless us with love like that of Mary.**

Forgive us when we justify our reluctance to give and share.

**Forgive us, and bless us with love like that of Mary.**

Forgive us when we are slow to express gratitude,  
 and take what we have for granted.

**Forgive us, and bless us with love like that of Mary.**

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### **Assurance of forgiveness**

Ever-giving God,  
 we sometimes close our hearts to you and to others;  
 but your heart is always open,  
 pouring out your grace and love,  
 filling our lives with the fragrance of forgiveness and friendship,  
 wiping away our fears and our regrets,  
 and receiving the thanks we would offer you.  
 May the trickle of our praise become a torrent,  
 and may the whole world be filled with your truth.  
 In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

### **A prayer of thanksgiving**

For homes and food;  
 for families and friends;  
 for all that we often take for granted –  
 generous God:  
**we give you thanks and praise.**

For your loving presence in our lives;  
 for strength and guidance;  
 comfort and peace –  
 generous God:  
**we give you thanks and praise.**

For the gift of Jesus;  
 for his living and teaching;  
 for his healing and example;  
 for his dying and rising –  
 generous God:  
**we give you thanks and praise.**

For all that you have done for us;  
 for all that you are for us;  
 for all that you will be for us –  
 generous God:  
**we give you thanks and praise. Amen.**

**R&S 41 For the beauty of the earth**

1 For the beauty of the earth,  
for the beauty of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and around us lies:

*Gracious God, to thee we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.*

2 For the beauty of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
sun and moon, and stars of light:

3 For the joy of ear and eye,  
for the heart and mind's delight,  
for the mystic harmony  
linking sense to sound and sight:

4 For the joy of human love,  
brother, sister, parent, child,  
friends on earth, and friends above;  
for all gentle thoughts and mild:

5 For each perfect gift of thine  
to our race so freely given,  
graces human and divine,  
flowers of earth and buds of heaven:

6 For thy people, evermore  
lifting holy hands above,  
offering up on every shore  
their pure sacrifice of love:

Folliot S. Pierpoint. (1835-1917)

**Old Testament Reading****Isaiah 43:16-21**

<sup>16</sup> Thus says the LORD,  
who makes a way in the sea,  
a path in the mighty waters,  
<sup>17</sup> who brings out chariot and horse,  
army and warrior;  
they lie down, they cannot rise,  
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:  
<sup>18</sup> Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.

<sup>19</sup> I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
<sup>20</sup> The wild animals will honour me,  
the jackals and the ostriches;  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
<sup>21</sup> the people whom I formed for myself  
so that they might declare my praise.

**Epistle Reading****Philippians 3:4b-14**

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

<sup>7</sup> Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

*Pressing towards the Goal*

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

**Gospel Reading****John 12:1-8***Mary Anoints Jesus*

**12** Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' <sup>6</sup> (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) <sup>7</sup> Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

**Reflection**

In this week's Gospel Reading from John, we find Jesus spending time in his friends' home. We hear that Mary pours oil over Jesus' feet and washes them with her hair. Here is her outpouring of thanks to Jesus for raising her brother, Lazarus, from the dead (John 11). As we're probably aware, this act was an extravagant gesture of gratitude that very much went against the social codes of the time. And we read of Judas' indignation regarding the waste of resources, and no doubt his reaction reflected how many would have felt. We then hear Jesus defend Mary's course of action.

I'm sure that, like me, you've heard this passage preached on quite a few times. This is definitely one of those stories that can be overlaid and obscured by some quite strange applications! For example, it has even been used by some as a justification for not addressing injustice: 'Jesus said that the poor will be always with us, so that's just a fact of life that we cannot change'. It has also been used as a justification for mighty and magnificent church buildings, overinterpreting the way Jesus seems to be pleased with how the perfume was lavished on him and applying it to buildings and furnishings. Any application along these lines probably leads to us siding with Judas, and in protest asking, 'why was this not sold and the money given to the poor?' Certainly, while these awkward applications would not be our 'cup of tea', we still may well wonder how we should grapple with this unusual, irrational and rather problematic action by Mary.

As we often do here with stories in the Scriptures, perhaps we remember that this as a specific story, happening at a specific time and is obviously not a general piece of teaching about wealth. When Jesus says, 'leave her alone' in verse 7, perhaps he means exactly that. Perhaps he is saying, 'stop bullying her, and recognise her gift of love as I do.' Rather than this being some theoretical discussion of what to do with wealth, it is, as one commentator explains, 'a moment of inarticulate, lavish, embarrassing love; the action of a woman whose devotion overrides her sense of propriety.' If we're wondering about the cost of the perfume, well, this is hard to estimate in today's money, but if we take the fact that a denarius is referred to as a day's wage for a labourer (Matt 20:2, John 12.5), then 300 denarii is close to a year's salary at a basic level: this is a hugely extravagant perfume to pour out! Clearly, just like the pearl merchant who sells everything to buy one pearl, and like the Pharisee who gives up his career, here Mary of Bethany gives her absolute all. And so when we then think Jesus' defending Mary, we are not hearing Jesus promoting a disregard for the poor, rather, Jesus is highlighting the astounding power of her gratitude.

As we consider how this may speak to us today, I'd like to suggest two or three pointers that may stimulate further reflection. Firstly, it is fair to say that Mary's great act of kindness would have strengthened Jesus for what was to come in the following difficult days. Maybe, this is a reminder to us all that there are times in all of our lives when we have to shelve our independence and perhaps even a little bit of pride, and be vulnerable enough to allow others to give to us and to support us. As one writer perceptively reminds us, 'the image of being Christ's body is one of inter-dependence not self-sufficiency. Jesus knew and models for us the willingness to receive from others as well as to give unstintingly.'

Also, as followers of Jesus, we all know that there is a need, there is a calling, for acts of kindness through which we demonstrate that we care, not just in words but in thoughtful actions. Personal acts of caring give crucial insight into what is really needed in the strained situation of the other. There is also a need, a calling for us to stand up for those who are in desperate need. And in this regard, we do acknowledge that Judas'

point about the poor was very much a legitimate one. Of course, if we only act on the level of personal kindness, we accept that we can be overwhelmed. And if we only campaign, then our actions are not properly grounded and we can lack insight, sensitivity and creativity in our work for justice. Friends, we need to hold together compassion and justice to allow the 'God in us' to serve the 'God in others'.

As I close, in all we are thinking about today as we hear once again this unusual but thought-provoking story about Mary anointing the feet of Jesus, we recall the power of thankfulness and we recommit ourselves to being thankful and expressing our thankfulness to God. We are deeply grateful for his many gifts and blessing, and for the big and little things that make life special, that make us feel alive and that energise our expressions of love to God. And now we live to serve others, in loving words and deeds, as a costly and concrete expression of our abiding thankfulness to God. Amen.

#### **A Prayer** (written by Steven Shakespeare)

Extravagant God,  
lavishing your love on our poverty of heart:  
inspire us to give without stint,  
to lose life that we might find it again,  
so the world will be filled  
with the fragrance of your love:  
through Jesus Christ, who offers himself for us. Amen.

#### *A moment for reflection*

#### **Our prayers of intercession**

*We think first of all the good things around us and the blessings we have received this week using the following refrain:*

Leader: Lord, we long to live thankfully

All: **Help our thanks to pour out.**

Lord, we thank you for all the goodness we have seen around us this week: for kindness of friends and strangers; for signs of spring bursting forth in our gardens, parks, fields and hedgerows; for sunshine and warmth. We thank you for friends to play with and food to eat.

We think, in silence, of a particularly special moment this week and thank you.

Leader: Lord, we long to live thankfully

All: **Help our thanks to pour out.**

Lord, we thank you for moments of busyness this week and moments of calm. We thank you for all those people who have crossed our path this week. We thank you for unexpected moments of goodness and joy, even in the midst of pain.

Leader: Lord, we long to live thankfully

All: **Help our thanks to pour out.**

Lord, we thank you for our favourite food, our favourite games, our favourite music, our favourite books and hobbies. We thank you for all the good things in our lives that we take for granted sometimes. Help us to see the worth and value in everything and everyone.

Leader: Lord, we long to live thankfully

All: **Help our thanks to pour out.**

*We turn our thoughts and prayers now to the needs of the world around us, both far away and close at hand. Using the following refrain:*

Lord, we long to live lovingly.

**Help our love to pour out.**

Lord, we continue to cry out to you for Ukraine. We thank you for those who are trying to work for peace. We pray for all who have been displaced from their homes, asking that they may find new life and love in unfamiliar places. We pray for those left behind, still living with the daily terrors of attack and not knowing what will happen next. We remember all those who have died, some of whom are known only to you.

Lord, we long to live lovingly.

**Help our love to pour out.**

We pray for girls in Afghanistan, once again refused an education. We pray that the Taliban will reverse its decision and listen to your voice, encouraging equality for everyone. We pray for all the places in conflict in our world, currently out of the headlines. Show us how we can help and support all those who need food, shelter and education to enable them to prosper.

Lord, we long to live lovingly.

**Help our love to pour out.**

We pray for our country, especially as the cost of living soars and all of us have to tighten our belts and make do with less. Show us how to support each other, even when we might be struggling ourselves. Give us a spirit of generosity and help us to be content with what we need rather than what we want. We pray for all who work in our foodbanks, our homeless hostels and our support networks. We remember all children in care and pray for those who work to find them permanent homes. We continue to lift to you all those who work in our health care system, as Covid still runs rife in our communities.

Lord, we long to live lovingly.

**Help our love to pour out.**

We also pray for all the communities we are part of: where we live, our church, our schools, places of work and our homes. Give us joyful hearts and generous spirits, so that we give our best to others. We remember all who mourn, all who are ill or sad at this time and all who are anxious or housebound. We pray blessings on all those in residential care and all unable to join us at the moment.

Lord, we long to live lovingly.

**Help our love to pour out.**

Finally, Lord, we commit the week ahead to you. We ask that you travel with us in our work, our play, our joys and sorrows. Help us to find space to breathe your fragrance and offer ourselves and all we have to you for you to make whole, strong and beautiful.

**Lord, we long to live with you with thankfulness and love.**

**We ask you to pour out your blessings**

**So that we can pour them out to others.**

**Amen.**

### **R&S 217 When I survey the wondrous cross**

1 When I survey the wondrous Cross,  
on which the Prince of glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.

2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
save in the death of Christ my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

3 See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

5 Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small;  
love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.

4 His dying crimson, like a robe,  
spreads o'er his body on the tree;  
then am I dead to all the globe,  
and all the globe is dead to me.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

***Our children and young people will return from Café Church and join us for Holy Communion***

**We are delighted to welcome Evelyn Bailey into membership at Christ Church.**

### **Holy Communion**

#### **Gospel Words**

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.  
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,  
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.      John 6:35

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking;  
if you hear my voice and open the door,  
I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.      Revelation 3:20

God proves his love for us in  
that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.      Romans 5:8

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,  
and I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;  
for I am gentle and humble in heart,  
and you will find rest for your souls.  
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.      Matthew 11:28-30

#### **Invitation to the Table**

Come to this table, not because you must but because you may,  
not because you are strong, but because you are weak.  
Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you a right to come,  
but because you need mercy and help.  
Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love him more.  
Come, because he loved you and gave himself for you.  
Come and meet the risen Christ, for we are his Body.

We pray together:

**Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **The Institution**

The apostle Paul tells us of the institution of the Lord's Supper:

For I received from the Lord  
 what I also handed on to you,  
 that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed  
 took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks,  
 he broke it and said,  
 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'  
 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying,  
 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.  
 Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'  
 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,  
 you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11.23–26

## **Thanksgiving**

Loving God,  
 we praise and thank you  
 for your love shown to us in Jesus Christ.

We thank you for his life and ministry,  
 announcing the good news of your kingdom  
 and demonstrating its power  
 in the lifting of the downtrodden,  
 and the healing of the sick,  
 and the loving of the loveless.  
 We thank you for his sacrificial death upon the cross  
 for the redemption of the world,  
 and for your raising him to life again,  
 as a foretaste of the glory we shall share.

We give you thanks for this bread and wine,  
 symbols of our world  
 and signs of your transforming love.  
 Send your Holy Spirit, we pray,  
 that we may be renewed  
 into the likeness of Jesus Christ  
 and formed into his Body.  
 This we pray in his name and for his sake. Amen.

## **The Breaking of Bread**

Jesus said, 'This is my body which is for you;  
 do this in memory of me'.

### *Sharing the Bread*

Take this in remembrance that Christ died for you  
 and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

## **The Lifting of the Cup**

In the same way,  
 he took the cup after supper, and said:  
 'This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood.  
 Whenever you drink it,  
 do this in memory of me.' 1 Corinthians 11:25

### *Sharing the Wine*

Drink this and remember that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful.

### Words of Acclamation and Prayer

Your death, O Lord, we commemorate.  
 Your resurrection we confess.  
 Your final coming we await.  
 Glory be to you, O Christ.

**Christ has died,  
 Christ is risen,  
 Christ will come again.**

**Father of all,  
 we give you thanks and praise,  
 that when we were still far off  
 you met us in your Son and brought us home.  
 Dying and living, he declared your love,  
 gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.  
 May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;  
 we who drink his cup bring life to others;  
 we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.  
 Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,  
 so we and all your children shall be free,  
 and the whole earth live to praise your name;  
 through Christ our Lord. Amen**

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### R&S 489 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,

1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,  
 naught be all else to me, save that thou art—  
 thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
 waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,  
 thou ever with me and I with thee, Lord;  
 thou my great Father, thy child let me be,  
 thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;  
 be thou my dignity, thou my delight,  
 thou my soul's shelter, and thou my strong tower;  
 raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

4 Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise,  
 thou mine inheritance, now and always;  
 thou and thou only, the first in my heart,  
 High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,  
 grant me its joys after vict'ry is won;  
 heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
 still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Ancient Irish poem  
 tr. Mary E. Byrne (1880-1931)  
 and Eleanor H. Hull (1860-1935) altd

**A sending out prayer**

Amazing God,  
we are so thankful for the gift of life!  
May our thankfulness to you pour out in our actions,  
in our choices, in our dealings with other people,  
in all that we do. **Amen.**

**The Blessing**

And may the blessing of God Almighty,  
Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,  
be upon us and those we love, this day and always. **Amen.**

**The Grace**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore. Amen.**