

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY, 3 April 2022 – LENT 5

COLLECT

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 126

- 1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, ♦
then were we like those who dream.
- 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter ♦
and our tongue with songs of joy.
- 3 Then said they among the nations, ♦
'The Lord has done great things for them.'
- 4 The Lord has indeed done great things for us, ♦
and therefore we rejoiced.
- 5 Restore again our fortunes, O Lord, ♦
as the river beds of the desert.
- 6 Those who sow in tears ♦
shall reap with songs of joy.
- 7 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed, ♦
will come back with shouts of joy, bearing their sheaves with them.

The Prophecy of Isaiah, Chapter 43.16-21

¹⁶ Thus says the Lord,
 who makes a way in the sea,
 a path in the mighty waters,
¹⁷ who brings out chariot and horse,
 army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
 they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
¹⁸ Do not remember the former things,
 or consider the things of old.
¹⁹ 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.
²⁰ 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,
²¹ the people whom I formed for myself
 so that they might declare my praise.

The Gospel according to John, Chapter 12, verses 1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary 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. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' ⁶(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.) ⁷Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

Reflection from Peter

Giving presents is a tricky business. You want to get it right, but, more often than not you feel you didn't quite hit the spot. There is a wonderful moment in James Baldwin's last novel *Just Above my Head* where the hero is doing last minute Christmas shopping. He's grabbing colourful socks, a set of handkerchiefs, a belt – thinking 'that'll do for cousin X, for aunt Y and uncle Z' Then he stops and puts them all back. He is suddenly struck by the realisation that what he buys tells him something about how much (or how little he cares for these people). These are people he loves: do three pairs of socks get anywhere near saying the right thing?

Today's Gospel gives us a wonderful example of risking everything with a gift. Mary takes a huge amount of perfumed oil – and very expensive oil at that – and massages Jesus' feet with it. It's over the top, wild, extravagant. But Mary does succeed in conveying the depth of her love for and gratitude to Jesus. Judas interrupts with what seems like a proper burst of common sense: This oil could have been sold to do good for hundreds of people – wouldn't that make more sense? And we can imagine that Mary herself may have thought this; wondered whether it was right to pour it all out on Jesus. There is no right or wrong here. Jesus simply says, "Leave her alone." What does matter is that Mary's gift was her way of recognising that God had given her everything she could ever need or want. God gives us life – and when human life ends, God invites us to share in the life that can never end. As we follow Jesus on his way to Jerusalem and the cross we wonder at the generosity of God, who does not abandon his creation no matter how badly we mess it up.