

twelvebaskets



LENT 5C

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Lent 5 - Year C
3rd April 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

94 STF – To God be the glory, great things he has done! OR

46 STF – Everlasting God, the years go by but you're unchanging

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

499 STF – Great God, your love has called us here OR

287 STF – When I survey the wondrous cross

Readings: Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8

Hymn:

436 STF – What shall I do my God to love, my loving God to praise? OR

489 STF – All I once held dear, built my life upon

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

470 STF – Lord for the years your love has kept and guided OR

455 STF – All my hope on God is founded

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

566 STF – Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee OR

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain?

Blessing

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Call to worship

By some mystery, the Spirit of God is here,
By the grace of God, all are welcome here,
In some unknown, unknowable way,
We are connected.
Open our hearts to your Spirit Lord, today.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

94 STF – To God be the glory, great things he has done! OR
46 STF – Everlasting God, the years go by but you're unchanging

Opening Prayers

Dear God,
Help me to be brave like Esther.

Help me to know who you are calling me to defend,
Protect,
And speak up for.

Give me strength to be bold,
Confident,
And relentless in the face of injustice.

Lord, sometimes I am unsure of what my next step is.

I want to speak but don't have words,
I want to act but don't know how to start.

Please send me people to partner with,
To journey with,
To be stronger together.

God of Wisdom,
Hear my prayer.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by All We Can, as part of the *Let Wisdom Speak* Lent resource

All Age Talk

[A simple sketch, with three voices: a narrator, Jesus and Judas.]

Narrator: Jesus continued on his way to Jerusalem. His disciples accompanied him and six days before the Passover feast they arrived in Bethany. While he was there Simon the leper held a feast in his home to honour Jesus.

Martha was there, serving the food as ever, and her brother Lazarus sat with the disciples at the table.

Her sister Mary took a jar of very expensive nard, broke it open and poured the essence over Jesus's feet. The scent of the perfume filled the whole house.

Judas: Lord! Have you seen what she's doing?

Jesus: It would be impossible to miss it, Judas.

Judas: Stop her – before it's all gone – it's worth a fortune. Look she's tipping it everywhere.

Jesus: No – she's pouring it on my feet.

Narrator: As Jesus spoke, Mary took the rest of the perfume and poured it over his head.

Judas: This is madness, Lord. We could have sold this and given the money away. I couldn't have earned that much in a year.

Jesus: Do you really have charity in mind, Judas?

Judas: What do you mean?

Jesus: Or would you prefer to give half away and keep the rest back for other things?

Judas: It would help with the finances, I suppose...

Jesus: Judas, you will always have the poor with you – you can help them any time you choose. But you will not always have me. Mary has chosen to help me now – she has anointed me for my burial and it won't be taken from her. Look at her, what she has done is incredible.

Many things may be forgotten Judas, including your convenient inclination towards charity – but she will never be forgotten, what she has done here today will be talked about all over the world. For the rest of time.³

[Pause].

How does this story make you feel? Who are you in the story?

Do you see yourself as Judas, worrying about making the plans work, about how the budget is going to survive? Or as Jesus, or Mary, making the dramatic gesture. Or perhaps, you are Martha or Lazarus - in the background of the story, doing the cooking, sitting with the disciples.

³ Taken from *Mary Anoints Jesus* by David Hopwood

We'll hear the version from John's gospel in a few minutes as part of our service. As you listen to the story again, place yourself within it. How is the story speaking to you? What invitation is the story making on your life, your situation, your calling?

How do you show God's love to the people around you?

Hymn:

499 STF – Great God, your love has called us here OR

287 STF – When I survey the wondrous cross

Readings: Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8

Hymn:

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Reflections on the reading

Today, let us hear a brief reflection on the lectionary readings from NT Wright.

Two stark characterizations from John: the full-blown devotion of Mary and the brooding cynicism of Judas. (On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays I think this may perhaps be the same story as that in Luke 7, where the woman is a 'sinner' and the host, and chief grumbler, is a Pharisee called Simon. Writing this on a Thursday, I acknowledge that the host in Matthew's and Mark's parallel to John is called Simon, but I still think Luke is talking about a different occasion.) Lazarus is alive again, and his sisters play out their accustomed roles, Martha serving and Mary at Jesus' feet.

Modern cities fill with noise, ancient ones (in the pre-soap days) with smell; Mary's perfume wafts its welcome fragrance all through the house. Of course it's outrageous, over the top. That's the point. Brothers don't get raised from the dead every day.

But whenever people worship Jesus with everything they've got, there's always someone in the background muttering that there's no such thing as a free jar of ointment. We watch in horror at the disintegration of Judas. First, we assume, his devotion has evaporated, then his loyalty, then his honesty towards others (his thieving), then his honesty towards himself (as in the present passage, where he says one thing, no doubt telling himself he really means it, while in fact meaning another), then, not long afterwards, his ability to choose good over evil altogether.

The downward slope starts gently, but gets steeper. Judas goes on choosing a world which revolves around himself, which then itself deconstructs. Judas symbolizes the way of self-destruction, just as Mary stands for the way of self-giving. Both are costly, but in utterly different ways: 'consumed by either fire or fire'.

Paul went through the process twice over. First, he gave up everything – his pride of birth, upbringing and character – in order to obey the crazy gospel of the crucified Messiah. Then, he discovered that following this Messiah meant a continual self-giving, pouring out his own energy, devotion and life itself at the feet of the one who had ‘made him his own’. Jesus validated Mary’s devotion by referring to his own approaching death; that same death was woven so deeply into the fabric of Paul’s thinking that his life was now dedicated, as he says elsewhere, to filling the world with the fragrance of the gospel.

The contrast of Mary and Judas, the one surprising by depth of devotion, the other by depth of deceit, runs back through Scripture, as would have been plain had the reading from Isaiah gone on another couple of verses. The creator and redeemer God makes rivers flow in the desert, and paths appear in the sea. The wild animals look on and pay him homage. Israel, the people for whose benefit these mighty acts are done, looks the other way, bored and sulky. Worth taking a minute, at this stage of Lent, to reflect on what smell we’re giving off.

[Pause]

What smell are you giving off?

How are wrestling with the challenges our churches and circuits are facing at the moment? The pandemic, and many other factors, have left many of us in difficult and fragile places - how are we responding to that?

[If it works in your context, it may be worth having a conversation about what NT Wright describes as a 'depth of devotion' (that fuels Mary's actions in the story) and whether that is at the heart of your current thinking as a congregation, or whether you have strayed too close to Judas' line of thinking - which is driven by earthly things like 'survival' and even 'greed'. You could have the conversation in small groups, and just invite people to write down one or two things that struck them from the conversation, and for them to bring those things to the front of church for prayer].

Let us pray.

Lord, you know our situation better than we know it ourselves,
You know each and every one of us, and you are calling us to follow in your way.
Lord, we come to you this day, knowing that we have fallen short of your glory, That sometimes we have strayed too close to the way of Judas in this story from the Bible.

Help us to see again today the way of Mary, the depth of devotion she had for you.
Show us how to reach those depths again, Lord God.
Amen.⁴

Hymn:

470 STF – Lord for the years your love has kept and guided OR

455 STF – All my hope on God is founded

⁴ Taken from NT Wright – Twelve Months of Sundays

Prayers of intercession

Response: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, as we give thanks for the example of our sister Martha, we pray for the Church throughout the world, and especially here in [...], that we might have the courage to declare with our words and our actions that you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Strengthen us by the power of the Holy Spirit so that we might be united with all who confess that you are Lord and so that we might, together, carry out your mission here on earth.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, as we remember that you laid aside your power and majesty and journeyed willingly towards Jerusalem and the cross, we pray for all those in positions of power and authority, and for those who govern. Bless them with wisdom and compassion, and guide each of us into the path of peace.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, who knew that there would always be poverty in this world while we continue to put our own needs and interests above those of our neighbours, we pray for all who are concerned about money, all who struggle to provide for their families, and all who do not know life in all its fullness. Help us to share the gifts of your creation and to mirror your abundant generosity.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, as we celebrate the costly generosity of our sister Mary, we pray that we too might love just as extravagantly. Give us the courage to offer all that we have and all that we are in your service, and to pour out our resources so that we might bless those around us. In a moment of quietness, we lift to you those who are known to us who are in need of God's healing and blessing.

[Silence]

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

Living God, we are responding to your invitation, seeking to build a better world. Help us to make use of our gifts in the service of your kingdom. Put these gifts of money to that use, in Jesus' name.

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Naomi Oates

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

566 STF – Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee OR

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain?

Blessing

Let us go from this place, from this moment,

With a renewed commitment to justice, to love, to hope and to grace.

As the season of Lent begins to draw to a close, and we get closer to Holy Week,

We commit ourselves to live lives inspired by resurrection again.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker