

Hymn

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **And also with you.**

Sentence

Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves. Psalm 126.6

Prayer of Preparation

**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.**

Hymn of Praise (Gloria)

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Christ, whose feet were caressed with perfume and a woman's hair,
you humbly took a basin and towel and washed the feet of your friends:
wash us also in your tenderness, that, embracing your service freely,
we may accept no other bondage in your name. **Amen.**

Isaiah 43.16-21

¹⁶ This is what the Lord says – he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, ¹⁷ who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: ¹⁸ 'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. ¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. ²⁰ The wild animals honour me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, ²¹ the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

Psalm 126

¹ When the Lord turned again the fortunes of Zion: **then were we like those restored to life.**
² Then was our mouth filled with laughter: **and our tongue with singing.**
³ Then said they among the heathen: **'The Lord has done great things for them.'**
⁴ Truly the Lord has done great things for us: **and therefore we rejoiced.**
⁵ Turn again our fortunes, O Lord: **as the streams return to the dry south.**
⁶ Those who sow in tears: **shall reap with songs of joy.**
⁷ They that go out weeping, bearing the seed: **shall come again in gladness, bringing their sheaves with them.**

Philippians 3.3-14

³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh – ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. ⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

John 12.1-8

¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷ 'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord, **praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

Sermon

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Introduction to the prayers 1

Let us pray for the world and for the Church.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Introduction of Lord's Prayer

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Jesus said: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. John 13.34

Invitation to confession

Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God, though we have rebelled and wandered far off. Let us then ask for mercy, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Confession

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge,

**we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do:
we have not loved you with our whole heart;**

we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.

Father, forgive us.

Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Absolution

Almighty God,

who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith:

pardon you and set you free from all your sins,

strengthen you in all goodness

and keep you in eternal life,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

HYMN

OFFERTORY

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

Opening

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Preface

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God. We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us. He was tempted in every way as we are, yet he did not sin. By his death on the cross and rising to new life, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people. By his grace we are able to triumph over every evil, and to walk in the way of his love. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:
**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy and gracious God, all creation rightly gives you praise. All life, all holiness, comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom you sent to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. Hear us, merciful Lord; through Christ accept our sacrifice of praise; and, by the power of your Word and Holy Spirit, sanctify this bread and wine, that we who share in this holy sacrament may be partakers of Christ's body and blood. Who, when his hour had come, on the night before he went up to the cross to make full atonement for the sins of the whole world, offering once for all his one sacrifice of himself, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

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

Therefore, in obedience to his command, we commemorate and celebrate his saving passion and death, his mighty resurrection and ascension into heaven and we eagerly await his coming again in glory. We thank you that by your grace alone you have accepted us in Christ; and here we offer you a spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable in your sight. Through Christ, receive this our duty and service, and grant that we who eat and drink these holy gifts may, by your Holy Spirit, be one body in Christ, and serve you in unity and peace. In your grace and mercy, bring us to the joy of your eternal kingdom with all the company of the redeemed. May we praise you in union with them, and give you glory through your Son, Jesus Christ. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, gracious Father, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Blessing and honour and glory and power be yours for ever and ever. Amen.

The gifts of God for the people of God.
Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful.

God of mercy,
may we who have shared in this holy meal
know your forgiveness in our lives,
bring your reconciliation to others,
and be a sign of your wholeness in this broken world.

**Father,
we offer ourselves to you
as a living sacrifice
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory.**

Hymn

Blessing

Christ our Saviour draw you to himself, that you may find in him crucified a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sin forgiven [and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.]Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen**



Today is the fifth Sunday in Lent, One week until the beginning of Holy Week and two weeks to Easter Sunday. Now we really start getting into what Easter is all about.

John tells us that this happened six days before Passover, the night Jesus would celebrate the Last Supper with his friends. Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem, knowing everything that will happen to him there. His friends decide to have a dinner party in his honour. Perhaps these beloved women have sensed Jesus' anguish and are trying to do something nice for him before it all happens. A shared meal with his nearest and dearest ought to be a time of support and friendship. Part of the tragedy of this little scene is that Jesus badly needs and wants his followers to be united. The rest of the world is plotting against him; his friends might at least have the decency to stick together and back him.



We have met this family before, we know them, we know that they each in their own way to love and serve the Lord and here they are again, behaving exactly in character. The family takes on their familiar roles; Marth is doing all the work in the kitchen; Lazarus is reclining at table and Mary is being a discerning disciple.

There are only two occasions when John uses the word we have translated here as 'dinner': this meal and the Last Supper, he wants us to know that there are parallels here with the other 'dinner'. Jesus' anointing by Mary anticipates both Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet at the last supper and Jesus' burial. The verb 'to wipe' is the same verb used to describe Jesus wiping of the disciples' feet at the Last Supper. The major role played by Judas, in this story, and his emphasis on money on each occasion, also suggests that we are supposed to link the two meals.



In Mary and Judas, we see two distinct responses to the arrival of Jesus' hour. Mary is the model of faithful discipleship, Judas unfaithful.

The mention that Judas would later betray Jesus is another reminder of the approaching meal plus it means that what might look like a reasonable request at first glance is taken with restraint by the readers. However, it also highlights the extravagance of Mary's act: this act of devotion is costing the equivalent of a year's wages.

Mary's act also anticipates the final anointing at his burial. Her act of love is a prophetic statement about the fact that before too long Jesus is going to be buried - and buried so hastily that there might not be time for a proper anointing so he's better have it straight away.



At the Last Supper Jesus will wash his disciples' feet as an expression of his love for them, as a way of drawing them into his life with God.

He will also ask them to repeat this act of service for one another, Mary has already done that for Him. So here we are given through Mary a picture of the fullness of the life of discipleship. Her act shows the love that will be the hallmark of discipleship and the recognition of Jesus's identity that is the decisive mark of Christian life.

The power of the witness of Mary's discipleship in this story is that she knows how to respond to Jesus without explicit instructions. She fulfils Jesus' command to love before he even teaches it; she understands Jesus' departure before he has taught his followers about its true meaning. In the anointing, she shows what it means to be one of God's own. She gives boldly of herself in love to Jesus, just as Jesus will give boldly of himself in love. Mary's act of anointing illustrates the vision of the new life to be lived by those who embrace Jesus' life and death



Jesus' response to Judas' disparagement is quite astonishing. Given his repeated statements about the importance of the poor, and the blessings that would come on them, we might have expected an affirmative statement. The only explanation is that Jesus believed

that his coming death would be the action through which the world as a whole, including the world of poverty and all that went with it, would be put to rights.

He knows that his time on earth with his disciples is very short and how urgent it is that it is vital that the disciples respond to Jesus while he is still with them. Mary has recognised this limit and responded to it.

Jesus' words about discipleship at the Last Supper will make explicit what this story shows: discipleship is defined by acts of love and our response to Jesus. It is worth noticing that John names a woman as the first to embody the love that is commanded of all disciples. Jesus disciples are people like Mary, whom Jesus loves and who love him and live out that love.



The disciples, like all the Jews of their day had been trying to follow the laws of the Old Testament but as Isaiah had prophesied Jesus is bringing in the new way. ¹⁸ *'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. ¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wastelands.*

No longer do those who are seeking the Lord struggle through a wilderness of laws and rules, of contradictions and uncertainty. Mary has realized the most important thing: that love is the command, the answer in every situation.



Paul put it another way, he had lived a life that in theory fulfilled every requirement for a perfect life in God, but he considered everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus the Lord, for whose sake he had lost all things. 'I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.' But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

Paul like Mary, put aside everything that was considered correct and strove to live a life that was pleasing to Jesus: a life of love for his Lord and other people.



Where are you in this story?

Are you with the shameless Mary, worshipping Jesus with everything she's got, risking the wrath of her family, the anger of men who want her to stay in her place, and the sneer of the person who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing?

Or are you with the cautious, prudent, reliable Judas (as he was seen by the other disciples), looking after the meagre resources, to provide for their needs and still have something left to give to the poor. Remember that no one suspected him of treachery even at the last supper.

Or are you back in the kitchen with Martha? How do you feel about your uninhibited sister? What do you think of dependable Judas and what do you think of Jesus and all the puzzling things he said?

No matter what our natural inclinations, whether we lean towards dramatic acts of service, restraint and care or acts of service behind the scenes we can all learn from Mary and do whatever we do with love for our Lord and his people.

Lent IS A TIME TO
GROW
CLOSER TO JESUS

In these last days of Lent, take the time to be with Jesus and tell him how much you love him. Spend some quality time with him and maybe pour out some of that precious commodity: time and I really don't think you will be disappointed. Listen to him, and you might even hear him say some words of encouragement.

Christ, whose feet were caressed with perfume and a woman's hair, you humbly took a basin and towel and washed the feet of your friends: wash us also in your tenderness, that, embracing your service freely, we may accept no other bondage in your name. **Amen.**