

READINGS

Principal Service Deuteronomy 26.1-11
 Psalm 91.1-2,9-16
 Romans 10.8b-13
 Luke 4.1-13

Second Service Psalm 119.73-88
 Jonah 3
 Luke 18.9-14

Third Service Psalm 50.1-15
 Micah 6.1-8
 Luke 5.27-39

COLLECT

Almighty God,
 whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,
 and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:
 give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit;
 and, as you know our weakness,
 so may we know your power to save;
 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.

(or)

Heavenly Father,
 your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
 and grew closer to you in the desert:
 help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
 that we may witness to your saving love
 in Jesus Christ our Lord.

POST COMMUNION

Lord God,
 you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven;
 by it you nourish our faith,
 increase our hope,
 and strengthen our love:
 teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread,
 and enable us to live by every word
 that proceeds from out of your mouth;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

HYMN SUGGESTION

O thou who came from above – Charles Wesley

O thou who camest from above
the fire celestial to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work and speak and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire
and still stir up the gift in me.

Still let me prove thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,
till death thy endless mercies seal,
and make the sacrifice complete.

Hymns Ancient and Modern New Standard no. 258

SERMON STARTER

*The Rev'd
Ruth Frampton,
Rector Teign Valley and
Haldon Hill
Mission Community*

The call to discipleship makes demands of us all. This first Sunday in Lent reminds us that before the resurrection comes the cross. Discipleship beckons us with a promise: 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved' - but if we follow in Jesus's footsteps we must not be surprised when we find the journey to be hard. Jesus, the Word made flesh, lived among us and was prey to the same temptations that divert us so often from the path we try to follow.

'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should! Emmanuel, God with us - could have turned stones into bread - after all, all things came into being through the Word - but that was not the point. Jesus's reply is not a new teaching: he is merely repeating Deuteronomy 8:3: 'one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.' Jesus has not come to rewrite the law, but to uphold it in all its fullness.

'Worship me and I will give you your heart's desire'.
Faust succumbed; Jesus did not.

SERMON STARTER

What idols do we worship? Power? Money? Consumerism? Celebrity? What do our hearts long for? Where do we fix our gaze and our attention? Popularity? Appearance, whether of beauty or fitness? Success born from ambition? All these things contain an element of good but they are not ends in themselves. If we pursue these worldly ambitions so blindly that they become all in all to us, we may be in danger of riding roughshod over others, blind to their equality with us as children of God; we may even become blind to the image of God in which we are made - in danger of losing our own core identity as beloved children of God.

And the ultimate test of all - the test of faith. 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here ...', insinuates the devil, for you know from the words of Psalm 91:11-12 that God will save you: 'For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' But Jesus replies, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' Follow the example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: 'If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.' (Daniel 3:17-18). Don't look for spectacular miracles: we know God has a care for even the smallest sparrow: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father' (Matt 10:29).

It is hard to keep alert all the time; life can be frenetic and the rush of events can choke every waking hour. What is opportunity and what is temptation? Simeon and Anna could recognise the coming of God's salvation in a baby. How is God working in the ordinary of our lives? Do we really see when we look? And really hear when we listen? Are our hearts and minds open to God working in new ways around us? God is with us and never leaves us - and that love is expressed in and through the people around us. Where is God active in our communities, both inside and outside our churches? Sometimes we are called to see things with different eyes.

Can we live in the midst of our world and not be tempted? Jesus understood that temptations surround us and prayed to his Father for his disciples, 'I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world' (John 17:15-16). To live in the world without belonging to the world summarises the essence of the spiritual life (Romans 8:13). The spiritual life keeps us aware that our true home is not here, surrounded by temptations to put me, me, me first, 'because you're worth it!' Our true home is where God resides: a home overflowing with an abundance of grace and love; a love that is always for-giving and never counts the cost. So in Lent we examine ourselves honestly and ask if we are doing enough to share the blessings we have received, 'the bounty that the Lord [y]our God has given' us.

READINGS

Year C

<i>Principal Service</i>	Genesis 15.1-12,17-18 Psalm 27 Philippians 3.17 - 4.1 Luke 13.31-35
<i>Second Service</i>	Psalm 135 Jeremiah 22.1-9,13-17 Luke 14.27-33
<i>Third Service</i>	Psalm 119.161-176 Genesis 17.1-7,15,16 Romans 11.13-24

COLLECT

Almighty God,
you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,
that they may return to the way of righteousness:
grant to all those who are admitted
into the fellowship of Christ's religion,
that they may reject those things
that are contrary to their profession,
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Almighty God,
by the prayer and discipline of Lent
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,
and by following in his Way
come to share in his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

POST COMMUNION

Almighty God,
you see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves:
keep us both outwardly in our bodies,
and inwardly in our souls;
that we may be defended from all adversities
which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

HYMN SUGGESTION

Fill thou my life O Lord my God – Horatius Bonar

Fill Thou my life, O Lord my God,
In every part with praise,
That my whole being may proclaim
Thy being and Thy ways.

Not for the lip of praise alone,
Nor e'en the praising heart,
I ask, but for a life made up
Of praise in every part:

Praise in the common things of life,
Its goings out and in;
Praise in each duty and each deed,
However small and mean.

Fill every part of me with praise;
Let all my being speak
Of Thee and of Thy love, O Lord,
Poor though I be and weak.

So shall no part of day or night
From sacredness be free,
But all my life, in every step,
Be fellowship with Thee.

Hymns Ancient and Modern New Standard no. 200

SERMON STARTER

*Dr Jon Curtis - Lay
discipleship project
manager*

The history of the world is full of former occupations. Now that humanity has reached the twenty-first century in all its automated glory, we can wonder in amazement at the jobs that some of our ancestors and forebears fulfilled. Whether it's the children that were sent climbing into the darkness above the fireplace to sweep the chimneys of grand houses, or the armies of agricultural workers that would descend into the fields at harvest time, we now live with a completely different relationship to the work that needs fulfilling, and the ways in which it is done. When we read both the story of the disciples catching more fish than their nets could manage in Luke 5, or Jesus talking about the building of towers to teach about the cost of discipleship in Luke 14:27-33, we can be forgiven for thinking that these are words and stories for a different era with little relevance to us today.

Luke 14:33 records Jesus saying this; 'any of you who does not give up everything cannot be my disciple'. Surely this attitude belongs in the past too, and God wouldn't expect us to respond in this way now? Are we really being asked to give up everything we have by a God who loves us? Is that the behaviour of a gracious and loving Heavenly parent?

SERMON STARTER

And yet, here it is in black and white – paying the full costs of discipleship is a very real requirement. This was not an easy path for those first disciples of Jesus, and it is not an easy path for us now. But Jesus is eminently fair throughout the gospels when it comes to the standards he asks for: these expectations are clearly explained. If the desire to build a tower overtakes us, and we set to work without fully understanding what will be required, we're likely to fall short of the high standards (no pun intended). Jesus is correct to say that an unfinished tower is no good to anyone. In his words, 'this person was unable to finish'. Our landscape is littered with ambitious architectural projects, and the failings are there for us all to see.

The question for us then is this – if we're stepping out and following Jesus' call to follow him, are we prepared to commit to this choice? When Simon Peter, James and John went fishing, and Jesus accompanied them to give direction, we were shown how significantly our tasks and lives can be changed by Jesus' involvement. In Luke's words 'they were all astonished at the catch of fish they had taken'.

To misquote President Franklin Roosevelt – when it comes to Jesus, the only thing to expect is the unexpected. In other words, all that we can fully know is that much will be required, in ways that we don't yet appreciate or understand. But to begin the journey means that we will be asked for much indeed, particularly in terms of faith – trusting God to be with us, no matter how hard the journey might be.

When Jesus tells Simon Peter to let down his fishing nets again, we can sense the doubt in Simon's reply. He doesn't expect the new command to make any difference to their haul of fish – he might well see Jesus as another armchair fisherman, with all the good ideas but none of the experience. And yet, he does as Jesus says, and his whole life changes.

We can be similarly inclined to think that we know best. And yet both of these stories tell us that we have to give space to the words and life of Jesus. Simon Peter knows as much, even though Jesus' kingship is nowhere near yet fully revealed. He's taken him out on the boat and started to engage with him, so when he speaks with authority, the fisherman decides to listen. The results are startling.

SERMON STARTER

This can hopefully lead us to a clarity about the unfinished tower – a structure with no purpose is a waste. A waste of the energy to plan and build, and a waste of resources. In this era of knowledge about the reduction of waste, we are well aware of the need to be careful with what we have – an unfinished construction project is much more wasteful than one that has never been started. The analogy is clear – if we are bothering to engage at all with the idea of ourselves as disciples, we need to commit to it. The old saying ‘in for a penny, in for a pound’ gets to the crux of the matter, and asks the question – ‘what does it really look like to commit?’ This was a question that Simon Peter asked himself throughout his life. Despite many well-recorded bumps in the road, he was a man who committed fully, all the way through until his death. Because of this commitment, he knew life in all its fullness.

This isn't a story for the past, or a tale about a bygone era – this is the choice that we still face today. What does it mean to commit, and how do we enter into this commitment wholeheartedly? Those questions are ones for you today, and you will all have different answers, but the ultimate truth is this – the commitment pays back in so many ways that we can't even imagine; for you, for your community and for the world. We might feel as if we can't give up anything else, but the truth is that we're set to gain everything. Thanks be to God.

READINGS

Year C

<i>Principal Service</i>	Isaiah 55.1-9 Psalm 63.1-9 1 Corinthians 10.1-13 Luke 13.1-9
<i>Second Service</i>	Psalms 12, 13 Genesis 28.10-19a John 1.35-51
<i>Third Service</i>	Psalms 26, 28 Deuteronomy 6.4-9 John 17.1a,11b-19

COLLECT

Almighty God,
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
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.

(or)

Eternal God,
give us insight
to discern your will for us,
to give up what harms us,
and to seek the perfection we are promised
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

POST COMMUNION

Merciful Lord,
grant your people grace to withstand the temptations
of the world, the flesh and the devil,
and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

HYMN SUGGESTION

I have heard the voice of Jesus say – Horatio Bonar (1846)

I have heard the voice of Jesus say,
 “Come unto me and rest.
 Lay down, O weary one,
 Lay down your head upon my breast.”
 I can to Jesus as I was,
 So weary, worn, and sad.
 I found in him a resting place,
 Ad he has made me glad

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 “Behold, I freely give
 The living water, thirsty one;
 Stoop down and drink and live.”
 I came to Jesus, and I drank
 Of that life-giving stream.
 My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
 And now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 “I am the dawning light.
 Look unto me, your morn shall rise,
 And all your day be bright.”

I looked to Jesus, and I found
 In him my star, my sun,
 And in that light of life I’ll walk
 Till trav’ling days are done

Hymns Ancient and Modern, New Standard Edition no. 247

SERMON STARTER

*The Venerable Andrew
 Beane - Archdeacon of
 Exeter*

Here’s some common and sound advice you may already know; there are two kinds of people – drains and radiators! Well, it’s not probably that simple but bear with me!

On the one hand, we have our Radiators; they are the people who put life into the saying ‘smile, and the world smiles with you.’ Radiators are infectious. They naturally make people feel good about themselves. They radiate something of the generosity of God, the kindness of Jesus and the joy of the Holy Spirit. They are inquisitive and playful but focused too. They have a cup that is not just half full but overflowing! Do you know any Radiators? There’s always someone in the Church or community who you could describe as a Radiator.

SERMON STARTER

Then, on the other hand, there are the Drains people in your life who one way or another leave you feeling diminished after you've been with them. You know the feeling – you started off a conversation bright and positive, and you came out of it dull, negative and frustrated, or maybe unexplainably cranky and irritable. Do you know any Drains? There's always a few in the Church or community who you could describe as Drains.

The sad things about Drains are that;

- They don't realise they're a Drain;
- They don't actually gain the energy that gets drained away from those they are around;
- And they drain their own energy too

It might not be as simple as this, and at times we might all be Radiators or we might be feeling more like Drains, but there is some truth in the analogy.

So, what have Radiators and Drains got to do with Fig Trees? Well, perhaps this parable told by St Luke is a first-century story about Radiators and Drains. Here's a fig tree, and the man comes looking. Does it bear fruit (a Radiator) or does it have none (a Drain). The parable goes on to say there is no fruit and the man suggests giving up, walking away; he has had the life drained out of him. Yet the gardener gives it one more go, dig down, add manure and hope that it might bear fruit; hope that the Drain might become a Radiator.

So, I want to suggest the fig tree teaches three things about Drains and Radiators or how we Radiate something of the generosity of God and not Drain the life out of Church.

First, the parable teaches us that doing the same thing over and over again bears little fruit; Albert Einstein supposedly said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." The man kept coming back to the fig tree to see if it had fruit; he did nothing, and each time, no fruit. In Church, do we keep doing the same thing over and over again, expecting something different to happen? Sunday by Sunday, does anything change other than the readings and the hymns? Yet we expect new people to come? How do we bear new fruit? Are we Radiating generosity, or is Church Draining the life out of us! The parable is challenging us!

Second, we can't keep taking and not giving. We need an attitude of gratitude if we want to see our churches, lives, and communities flourish. The fig tree was basically sucking the life out of the soil it was growing, yet there was no fruit. It was Draining life and not Radiating generosity. John Wesley said, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long

SERMON STARTER

as ever you can.” What would our churches look like if we started to Radiate this kind of generosity, “Helping one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you”, as Mother Teresa said.

Thirdly, the parable tells us of the gospel of second chances. The gardener didn't cut the fig tree down but dug around it, fed it with manure and gave it time. It's always Jesus' way to give people a second chance. We have a moment in this season of Lent to ponder our lives to think of the times when we're Radiators and when we've been Drains. What sucks the life out of us that we need to stop and what gives us life. What small steps can we take to start to change? Desmond Tutu said, “Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

One last thing, the parable teaches us that if we do nothing, then the tree is cut down! There comes a time when that's it. God has utter faith in us; there is no Plan B we are it. The Church is always just one generation away from failure; if we don't pass on the Good News, who will? The parable is a challenge to us: are we going to Radiate the generosity of God, the kindness of Jesus, the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps this Lent you can plant a tree as a response to this parable or set up a prayer tree in your church.

Are we Radiators or Drains?

READINGS

Year C

<i>Principal Service</i>	Joshua 5.9-12 Psalm 32 2 Corinthians 5.16-21 Luke 15.1-3,11b-32
<i>Second Service</i>	Psalm 30 Prayer of Manasseh or Isaiah 40.27 - 41.13 2 Timothy 4.1-18 Gospel at Holy Communion: John 11.17-44
<i>Third Service</i>	Psalms 84, 85 Genesis 37.3-4,12-36 1 Peter 2.16-25

COLLECT – OR USE MOTHERING SUNDAY PROVISIONS

Merciful Lord,
absolve your people from their offences,
that through your bountiful goodness
we may all be delivered from the chains
of those sins
which by our frailty we have committed;
grant this, heavenly Father,
for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord
and Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Merciful Lord,
you know our struggle to serve you:
when sin spoils our lives
and overshadows our hearts,
come to our aid
and turn us back to you again;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

POST COMMUNION

Lord God,
whose blessed Son our Saviour
gave his back to the smiters
and did not hide his face from shame:
give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time
with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

HYMN SUGGESTION

Lord Jesus Christ (Living Lord) – Patrick Appleford

Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us
You are one with us, Mary's Son
Cleansing our souls from all their sin
Pouring Your love and goodness in
Jesus our love for you we sing,
Living Lord

Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day
Teach us how to pray, Son of God
You have commanded us to do
This in remembrance Lord of you
Into our lives your power breaks through,
Living Lord

Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you
Live my life for you, Son of God
All your commands I know are true
Your many gifts will make me new,
Into my life your power breaks through,
Living Lord

Hymns Ancient and Modern, New Standard no. 391

SERMON STARTER

*The Rev'd John Roles -
Team rector of Holy Trinity
and St Peter Ilfracombe
with St Peter Bittadon*

Today we celebrate the joy, the generosity, and the excitement of love.

The story of the prodigal son is one of the most famous and familiar of the parables, but what is it about? Is it about the wayward son? Is it about the forgiving father? Is it even, perhaps, about the jealous brother? Or is it about the generosity of love?

The truth is that it is all of these things, and more. The exciting thing about the parables is that they have the power to speak to us in our own situation.

Today, on this Mothering Sunday, the story must speak to us through the image of parenthood. It is the story of a father and his children.

Our story is about a rich, generous and loving father who wishes only the best for his sons. He is prepared to give to each all he has, in equal measure.

For Christians, the image of a father encourages us to think of God; so, is this parable about good parenting or is it about God?

SERMON STARTER

For me it is about both those things. In the details, we can see the challenges of parenthood; but in the whole story we can see joy in the generosity of God the Father.

Being a parent is a privilege but it is also an awesome responsibility. Parents choose to create a new life but, at birth, that life immediately takes on an independent character.

A new parent is about to embark on the most important and responsible task of his or her life – and it's frightening. There are no manuals, no training; only a deep rooted desire to get it right and a deep rooted fear of getting it wrong.

It is difficult to strike a balance between creative encouragement and the deepest desire to protect. And it is often the conflict of a child who wishes to become independent, to be herself, with the parent's need to care, that causes stress in a family; especially in the teenage years!

Life as a parent is often about living on the edge of fear.

The father in today's parable is brave enough to let both his sons have their head; "he divided his property between them."

When the younger son asks for his share, it is given. Is the father naïve? Does he not recognise that the boy has a tendency to waywardness?

Like any loving parent, the father accepts the risk of love.

The story is familiar; the younger son is eager to experience life and ends up squandering away his inheritance, whilst the elder brother continues to work on the family farm. Soon, the younger son is having the worst possible life for a Jew; he has lost everything and is looking after the pigs of a gentile. In desperation, he is even jealous of the meagre food of the pigs, for he has nothing of his own.

He decides to return home, not, in fairness, expecting anything other than to be treated as a hired hand – a manual worker. He realises he has been profligate, that he's had his chance and blown it. We have to imagine that he believes his father to be generous enough to at least give him a job.

But let us look at this father. When the son "was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion." Notice this, "while he was still far off" his father saw him. This conjures images of a father who is always on the look-out for his son, a parent who can never be at ease when one of his sons is in danger. The father has compassion for him, and we see him running towards his son, embracing him and kissing him. There is clearly joy in the father's heart and actions. I love the detail that the old man runs towards his son; he cannot wait!

SERMON STARTER

At this point he has had no requests or explanations; he is simply overwhelmed at the return of the son he loves.

The son wishes to explain, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father is not listening; already he is instructing his slaves to bring the finest robe and prepare the finest food. The rejoicing begins even before the older brother has left the fields.

There is, one might say, something irrational about the father’s reaction; it is immediate and, for that time, entirely focussed on the younger son – we can, perhaps, understand the older brother’s resentment – but it is the overwhelming and unconditional love of a parent for a child who is out of danger, “let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!”

Overwhelming and unconditional! Joyful and generous!

If you know Rembrandt’s painting of The Return of the Prodigal Son, you will recognise the tattered kneeling figure of the younger son being blessed by a grateful father; the light captures both. But notice also, the shadowy background figure of the elder brother, well dressed and brooding; the light hardly touches him.

This week, Dave Hopwood has encouraged us to look at two contrasting figures.

The rich fool, who gathers the fruits of the earth, which could have enhanced the lives of others, into his enormous and expensive barn, where, after his death it will rot away. A man who has no joy in life with others; “and I will say to my soul” (Lk 29): he has no one else to talk to.

Contrast this with the unworthy Zacchaeus, touched by the generosity and urgency of Jesus’ love – “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today” (Lk 19:5) – and who expresses his joy in sacrificial giving; “Half of my possessions I will give to the poor; and, if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much” (19:8).

In these stories we see the contrast of selfishness and selflessness. The shadowy brother for whom the fatted calf will taste like gall; the acquisitive farmer, lonely and unloved in his echoing barn. The joyful, generous father who, ever watchful, runs towards his son; the cheat who is so touched by the unaccountable call of Jesus that it spills out in generous recompense.

The common message is in the joy of generous love; that joy of a parent which can overcome times of pain and regret; that joy in accepting forgiveness and changing as a result.

SERMON STARTER

What Jesus is telling us about in this parable is not about our earthly fathers and mothers but about our heavenly Father who created us all, who is parent (with the dual nature of a mother and a father) to us all. He, like the father in the parable, will rejoice at our own home-coming.

God created us in His own image; He gave us that same capacity to love. Today we remember and give thanks for our mothers, and for those who have demonstrated a mother's care for us. In that selfless, unconditional, joyful, generous love we come closest to understanding the love of our creator God, who is ever joyful at our coming home to Him.

READINGS

Year C

<i>Principal Service</i>	Isaiah 43.16-21 Psalm 126 Philippians 3.4b-14 John 12.1-8
<i>Second Service</i>	Psalm 35 2 Chronicles 35.1-6,10-16 Luke 22.1-13
<i>Third Service</i>	Psalms 111, 112 Isaiah 35.1-10 Romans 7.21 - 8.4

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.

(or)

Gracious Father,
you gave up your Son
out of love for the world:
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,
that we may know eternal peace
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

POST COMMUNION

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us
that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters
we do also for you:
give us the will to be the servant of others
as you were the servant of all,
and gave up your life and died for us,
but are alive and reign, now and for ever.

HYMN SUGGESTION

All that I am, all that I do – Sebastian Temple

All that I am, all that I do
All that I'll ever have I offer now to you

Take and sanctify these gifts
For your glory Lord
Knowing that I love and serve you is enough reward

All that I am, all that I do
All that I'll ever have
I offer now to you

All that I dream, all that I pray
All that I'll ever make
I give to you today

Take and sanctify these gifts for your glory, Lord
Knowing that I love and serve you is enough reward

Anglican Hymns Old and New (revised and enlarged) no. 24

SERMON STARTER

The Rev'd Trevor Marshall
- National Giving Ministry
Advisor

Today we are looking at the passage where Mary anoints Jesus' feet in John 12, also found in Luke 7: 36-50.

A whole pint of nard! Such extravagance! No wonder such generosity is recorded. For someone to spend a whole year's wages on an act such as this surely shows how much Jesus meant to Mary. But it is interesting to note that her devotion to Jesus went far beyond pouring expensive perfume over his feet. She then wiped his feet with her hair. This was unthinkable – a Jewish woman uncovering and letting down her hair and then wiping someone's feet with it. This was an act of unselfish generosity. Generosity of wealth, attention, and care.

These acts of Mary were not the acts of someone who was showing off. They were not acts of someone who was giving of great wealth and emotion for their own benefit. This was someone who was acting out generosity as a result of unwavering faith and love. The anointing of His feet was done out of humble and heartfelt love, of generosity of spirit.

It is a question that we should ask ourselves about our generosity; is it done with humble and heartfelt love? Is it done out of our personal spirit of generosity? We should ask ourselves why we act generously. We know that there are times when our giving is done out of a sense of duty towards the church community to which we belong. A sense of our giving being a response to the needs of the church. While it is true that the church has needs that can only be

TALK

met through the generosity of the church community, is this the true response to God's love that is heartfelt and humble?

What does it mean to respond to God's love in a generous way? If we look at the actions of Mary in this passage, we can see that her response is more than what was needed at the time. Her response was to go overboard with her generosity; to give a whole pint of this precious perfume. We can infer that Mary and her family were rich enough to be able to keep back a significant amount of their wealth and hold it in the form of this expensive perfume. But at the time, Mary used this saved wealth in the service of Christ. What was being held back is used. This act of Mary should lead us to ask ourselves what is generous in our own situations. How much of our wealth and resources are we willing to hand over to God?

Mary's generosity was not just of the expensive perfume. Mary was generous with her time. Time that could have been spent on herself. But she gave that time to care for Jesus. Mary was generous with her attention. Sitting at the feet to Jesus and focusing on anointing his feet; generous with her care. Mary's generosity was of her reputation. Letting her hair down in spite of what the assembled disciples would say. And Mary was generous with her comfort. Jesus was shortly to die on the cross. Mary's act was the act of comforting a man who knew his fate. Mary was generous in so many ways.

If we believe that God's generosity towards us is so great that He gave his only son for our sake and that everything that comes to us comes from God, then what can we do to repay that generosity? We are not able to anoint the feet of Christ, but we can respond in a way that recognises the sacrifice that has been made for us. What may seem to be an extravagant sacrifice on our part is nothing compared to the sacrifice made for us. The wasteful generosity of Mary's anointing is nothing compared to the generosity of God's love for us. No matter how much we give, it is but a widow's mite compared to what we receive from God. Our generous giving in response to God's love can be a sacramental token of the loyalty, love and devotion that we have towards our Lord and Saviour. The act of giving reminds us of all that we have been given. The act of giving is our sacrifice in response to His sacrifice made one for all upon the cross.

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As we prepare ourselves for remembering the sacrifice the Christ made, we may ask ourselves how we are being generous in response to that sacrifice made once for all upon that cross. Let us take this opportunity to reflect on that sacrifice made by Mary at the feet of Christ. Let us take this opportunity to find our own, personal pint of pure nard. Let us make our own sacrifice. Let us sit at His feet and offer ourselves in response to his generosity.

READINGS

Year C*Principal* **Liturgy of the Palms:**

Service Luke 19.28-40
Psalm 118.1-2,19-29

Liturgy of the Passion:

Isaiah 50.4-9a
Psalm 31.9-16
Philippians 2.5-11
Luke 22.14 - 23.56 or
Luke 23.1-49

Second Psalm 69.1-20
Service Isaiah 5.1-7
Luke 20.9-19

Third Psalms 61, 62
Service Zechariah 9.9-12
1 Corinthians 2.1-12

COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example
of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
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.

(or)

True and humble king,
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant us the faith to know you and love you,
that we may be found beside you
on the way of the cross,
which is the path of glory.

POST COMMUNION

Lord Jesus Christ,
 you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant,
 and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation:
 give us the mind to follow you
 and to proclaim you as Lord and King,
 to the glory of God the Father.

HYMN SUGGESTION

Give thanks with a grateful heart – Henry Smith

Give thanks with a grateful heart
 Give thanks to the Holy One
 Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Don
 Give thanks with a grateful heart
 Give thanks to the Holy One
 Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son
 And now let the weak say I am strong,
 Let the poor say I am rich
 Because of what the Lord has done for us
 And now let the weak say I am strong
 Let the poor say I am rich
 Because of what the Lord has done for us

Anglican Hymns Old and New (Rev and Enl.) no. 219

SERMON STARTER

*Brigit Kiyaga - Mission
 Resources Advisor In the
 Diocese of Exeter*

Palm Sunday is a significant moment in our church calendar where we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Verses 30, and 31 of Luke 19 say: "Go into the next village, where you will find a young donkey that has never been ridden. Untie the donkey and bring it here. If anyone asks why you are doing that, just say, 'The Lord needs it.'" This verse also speaks to us of the generosity of the colt owners. On the back of a colt Jesus entered Jerusalem. When the owner heard the words 'The Lord needs it', which the disciples were summoned to say when asked why it was untied, there was no need for a further conversation. These words were enough to put the owner's minds to rest.

If you have ever wondered if God uses his people to bring about his Kingdom; than this is your passage to turn to. God uses people like you and me to share of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Your gift, your talents, your time, and your resources can be used for his purposes. You are invited to share that what you have been given to those around you and to count it a privilege, like the Macedonian church when asked to contribute to the church in Jerusalem, to share in this way.

SERMON STARTER

When one of the former US presidents came back from one of his visits to his local church, his adviser asked him his thoughts on the sermon. He replied: 'I thought the sermon was carefully thought through, eloquently delivered.' On which the adviser answered: 'You thought it was a great sermon?' 'No,' he replied, 'I thought he failed because he did not ask of us something great.' Today's passage asks us to respond too, perhaps with a first 'yes' to the invitation to love and serve Christ, or perhaps a 'yes' to a renewed sense of purpose and destiny as we offer of ourselves to the King of all Kings. I expect the Jewish people didn't anticipate this type of entry into Jerusalem and would, perhaps, have hoped for a Messiah who came, ready to fight, on a horse. Yet, Jesus' entry was one that was humble and peaceful, like it was promised in Zechariah 9:9. He invites us to step into his footprints, to deny ourselves, take up his cross and follow him (Luke 9:23).

We can only imagine what it would have been like to hold these branches, to shout 'Hosanna' and, to anticipate the Kingdom that he came to establish amid a suffering society. A few days after this historic moment Jesus walks the 'Via Dolorosa' a way of suffering that is described in the verses of Philippians 2:7 'he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.' Where do you picture yourself as Jesus continues to walk this road to Golgotha? Are you amongst the crowd, the children, women, or disciples? Take a moment now to remember these days, these events, that made such an extraordinary impact on your life and the lives of Christians across the Globe.

As we prepare for Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday today is moment to remember the road Jesus walked to the cross. Matt Redman in his song 'Once again' describes it as follows;

'Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice;
you became nothing, poured out to death.
Many times I've wondered at your gift of life,
and I'm in that place once again,
I'm in that place once again.

And once again I look upon the cross where you died.
I'm humbled by your mercy and I'm broken inside.
Once again I thank you,
once again I pour out my life.

Now you are exalted to the highest place,
King of the heavens, where one day I'll bow.
But for now I marvel at this saving grace,
and I'm full of praise once again,
I'm full of praise once again.
And once again...'

SERMON STARTER

This 'once again' is a call to all of us, to pause, to be still and marvel at His saving grace. His astonishing love for us, brought us amazing grace. It is a grace that won't let go, against conditions, it is a grace that will see us through the storms of our lives and will bring us to life everlasting.

Today it is my prayer for you and me that we will be surprised by the vastness of his love for us. When you remember the entry he made into Jerusalem, the generosity and obedience of the colt-owners, the request to respond and to worship the King of all Kings, who came to live with and amongst us and gave his life as a ransom for many, may your hearts be filled with thanksgiving for all He has done for you and for me.

READINGS

Year C

Principal Service Acts 10.34-43 or
Isaiah 65.17-25
Psalm 118.1-2,14-24
1 Corinthians 15.19-26
or Acts 10.34-43
John 20.1-18 or
Luke 24.1-12

Second Service Isaiah 43.1-21
1 Corinthians 15.1-11
or John 20.19-23
Evening Psalms
Psalms 105 or 66.1-11

Third Service Ezekiel 47.1-12
John 2.13-22
Morning Psalms
Psalms 114, 117

COLLECT

Lord of all life and power,
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son
overcame the old order of sin and death
to make all things new in him:
grant that we, being dead to sin
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
be praise and honour, glory and might,
now and in all eternity.

(or)

God of glory,
by the raising of your Son
you have broken the chains of death and hell:
fill your Church with faith and hope;
for a new day has dawned
and the way to life stands open
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

POST COMMUNION

God of Life,
who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son
to the death of the cross,
and by his glorious resurrection
have delivered us from the power of our enemy:
grant us so to die daily to sin,
that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

HYMN SUGGESTION

How Deep the Father's Love for Us – Stuart Townsend

How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That he should give his only Son
To make a wretch of his treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss,
The Father turns his face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon the cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life.
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from his reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart.
His wounds have paid my ransom.

SERMON STARTER

Dave Hopwood
Author and speaker

In his book, *Who Moved the Stone*, Frank Morison suggests that while the male disciples fled back to Bethany to Mary and Martha's house, the women most likely stayed in Jerusalem over that Easter weekend. Though it was dangerous they wanted to remain close and to express their devotion to Jesus, even at this most bleak of times. The kindness they had received from him drew generosity from them. They wanted to care for him, even as his life ebbed away. Two of the women stayed close on Good Friday and crept through the lengthening shadows so that they could see where Jesus was buried; they had a plan to return on Sunday and properly prepare his body. That Sunday morning trip must have been risky, they came under cover of the half-light as dawn was creeping over the horizon. Plus they knew the tomb had been sealed and had no idea how they might open it. Yet still they came. Still they wanted to offer a final act of worship to the man from Galilee who had brought so much into their lives. You could say that even in that period of his death Jesus resurrected courage and kindness in others.

Resurrection surrounded Jesus as he travelled around. He was constantly reviving those who sought him out. In spirit, heart and mind, and on at least three occasions, in their bodies as well. He never held back, and seemed to make a ministry out of the unexpected interruptions that came his way. On one occasion, when a woman who had been sick for twelve years secretly reached out and drew healing from him in the crush of an excited crowd, Jesus refused to move until he could offer her more than this. He waited until he could look her in the eyes and show her how much she meant to God. She had lost everything over the years, money, health, dignity, and Jesus was set on generously resurrecting hope within her. When a rich, despised and disillusioned tax collector was willing to look foolish and climb a tree to get a look at him, Jesus burst into his life with a smile and an open heart. He resurrected meaning and integrity in Zacchaeus's life, so much so that the whole town was blessed. Zacchaeus did a massive u-turn, vowing to pay back all those who had lost money under him.

SERMON STARTER

And so to Sunday morning, and the feelgood ending no one saw coming. And once again Jesus upends expectations. Women were seen as second-class citizens in that day. And could not be witnesses in court. And yet here we find two angels at the open tomb telling these faithful women to go back and bear witness to what they have found. Jesus no longer held by death, but his neatly folded grave clothes a sign of his complete and perfect work of resurrection.

We live in a world which longs for resurrection. Creation itself groans and struggles as it longs for change and a better way. So many lives are shattered and torn by our desperate and often selfish schemes of life. And even as possible solutions are offered up, these themselves can lead to greater fractures, greater strife between nations and people. Peace on earth, the angel announced to those hungry shepherds. So, in the light of resurrection, where is that now?

Well, like these faithful women we see glimpses of it as we muddle through our days, signs of the hope of the living Jesus. In kindness expressed, in those who stand up for justice, in the courage of ordinary people reaching out to others. In the beauty and wonders of creation. Psalm 8 describes us as created and called, beneath a skyful of stars. Tiny yet splendid – reminded of how precious and valued we are by these nightly signs of resurrection hope. A sign that we matter, that we are made by a caring creator, and that we are worth the life, death and resurrection of that wonderful man of Galilee. The prophet Habakkuk spoke of a time when the earth would be filled with the awareness of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea. The glory is here, in so many small and large ways, but it's the awareness that we sometimes lack, so easy to miss the presence of God as we hurtle from a to b, trying to keep our heads above water. There's a saying I love, 'changing the world one smile at a time'. We may or may not have the resources or strength to do great things but even the smallest kind word or action is a testimony to the presence of the glory of God, the hope of resurrection in this fragmented world. A sign that the God of all peace and hope is present with us and working through us to others.