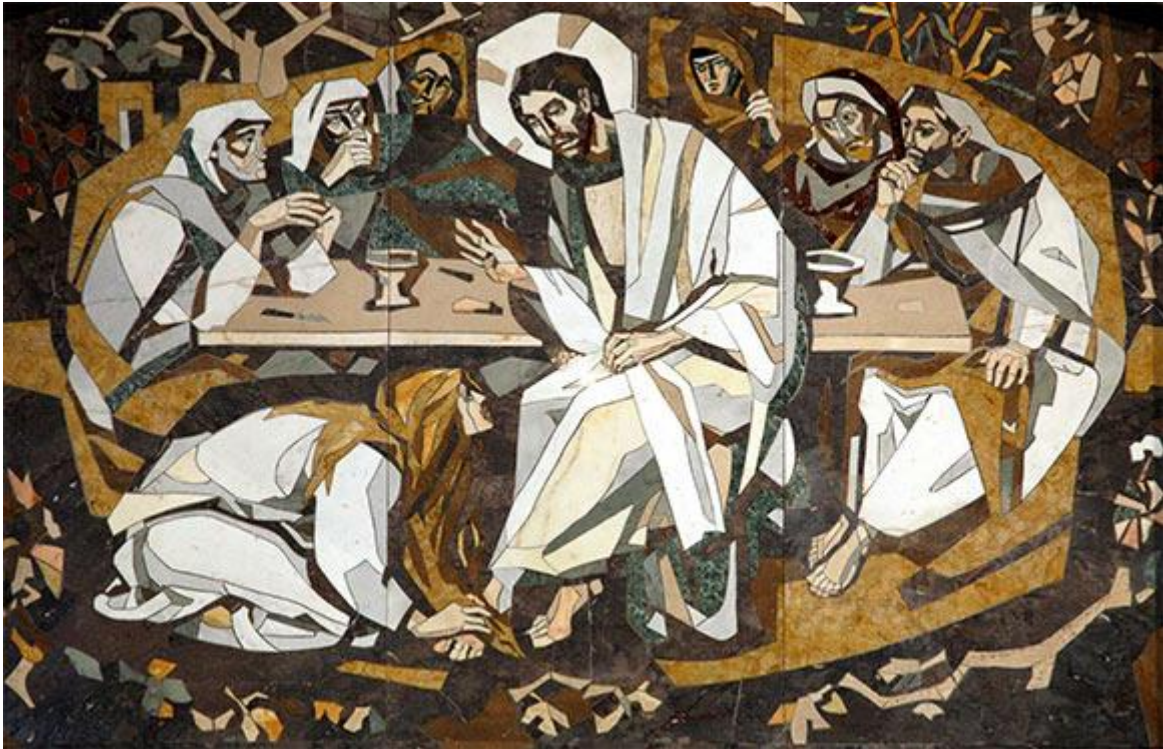




**Fifth Sunday in Lent
Sunday, April 7th, 2019**

The Religious Instinct



Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus' feet as others look on with sense of disapproval: Anon

Today we read the Gospel story of Mary of Bethany anointing Jesus' feet. There are similar stories in the other Gospels, each with their own character. What stands out in this reading is the manner in which the anointing is set against how the proceeds of the sale of the perfume involved, could have served the poor. Leaving aside the issue of the sincerity of such a challenge – coming as it does from the soon to be discredited Judas Iscariot – the story raises an important question for people of religious belief: is Christian faith just about ethics and social service, or is there something beyond this: the religious instinct, which in itself carries weight? How do the religious and ethical instincts relate or connect?

In any case, what is significant here, is that in contrast with our previous Gospel readings through Lent, all of which carry ethical weight, Jesus' struggle with the 'powers' or institutions of his day – the state, religion – and his doubts about dynastic families – here we turn to the religious moment in its most pure, perfumed form.

OUR GATHERING

Welcome

In the name of God our Father and Mother
In the name of the Son
In the name of the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with
And also with you

**Let's Sing: Praise with joy (TiS 179, Praise My Soul, John L. Bell
& Graham Maule)**

Opening Prayers

We begin this morning with a prayer that flows naturally and simply from the Gospel: the spontaneous act of Mary – was it Mary Magdalene – no, but later generations liked to think it was. In fact, the name Mary (Mariam) was very common in the Ancient near East, just as it is today in the Middle East, and here it is Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, who appear elsewhere in the gospels. Let us offer this prayer together!

Bethany Friends

His Bethany friends
make him most welcome; again.
Jesus is grateful.

Brother Lazarus
reclines at table with him
Martha is serving.

Mary! Ah, Mary.
What are you about to do
to demonstrate love?

Mary comes, bringing
a pound of costly perfume;
pours it on his feet.

The fragrance lingers,
along with indignation:
What outrageous waste!

Such extravagance
and squander! T'was better sold
and spent on the poor.

Returning her love,
Jesus speaks to defend her;
She has done no wrong!

This beautiful gift,
images her love for me;
soon I will be gone.

The poor will remain
to provide new occasions
to demonstrate love.

***Gather what remains,
save it for my burial;
it comes soon enough.***

Ken Rookes 2019

The Peace

SMG

Lent Event

Introduction

LET'S HEAR THE WORD

Some Insights about the Religious Instinct

A person is responding to love and acceptance. It is not the time to talk budgets, but to value the person.

William Loader on the Story of Mary. Lectionary Resources, Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia

However that may be, it is practical love for one's neighbour which is played off against an act which can be made explicable only as an act of love for Jesus...What emerges clearly in all four accounts is that Jesus not only defends unconditionally the act of the woman, but in all solemnity acknowledges that it is a good act which belongs necessarily to the history of salvation, even though it seems to be wholly superfluous, an act of sheer extravagance, which can serve 'only' the purpose of representing direct and perfect self-giving to Him."

Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics IV.2, p.797

To live religiously, we 'die to the world' and afterwards start to live in earnest. By 'dying to the world' and giving up our lives to God, faith promises a miraculous return of life and possibility. This paradox is at the heart of Christian faith.

Jeff Mason, "Søren Kierkegaard"

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.

Ignatius of Loyola

Isaiah 43:16-21 (NIV)

Today's passage speaks of the hope of return of the exiles to their homeland. In 587BCE the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem and overran the countryside of Judah. The city of Jerusalem, with its temple, had been destroyed. The institution of kingship in Jerusalem, with its long line of descendants of King David, had come to an end. Everything that had constituted the world of the people of Jerusalem and Judea had been decimated. They even began to question whether the God they had worshipped for centuries had any efficacy at all. The unknown prophet known as Second Isaiah works hard to convince the people that they can still have hope in the God of their ancestors. One way in which the prophet saw fit to discuss the question of the efficacy of the God of Israel was to put God 'on trial'. Isa 43:16-21 is part of a larger trial scene (Isa 43:1-44:5) in which Yahweh's sovereignty is at issue. Today's passage takes up part of the third oracle in the section. In each of the oracles in the section Yahweh is identified in a different way: 'your creator' (v. 1), 'your redeemer' (v. 14), as one 'who makes a way in the sea' (v. 16) and as the one 'who made you' (44:2). The point of the trial scenes in Second Isaiah is to argue that Yahweh, Israel's God, is indeed the creator not only of Israel but of all the cosmos and clearly the one who then is able to both judge and redeem the people.

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 (RSV)

Psalm 126 is a community petition for deliverance based on the remembrance of past deliverance. As one writer puts it, it is about 'joy remembered, and joy anticipated' (J.L. Mays). In this context it fits well with the reading from Isaiah 43:16-21 with reference to past events in relation to the present and in speaking about water in the desert.

The psalm breaks into two parts: vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-6. Verses 1-3 speak of a past time of the restoration for Zion. It is the vocabulary of repentance or return with the clear acknowledgment that restoration is always at the initiation of Yahweh. It is Yahweh's 'return' that makes the restoration of the people possible. However, in Psalm 126 there is no mention of the people's iniquity or sin, nor is there any mention of Yahweh's anger. The recollection of restoration leads straight to overwhelming laughter and joy, which is infectious and the nations now recognise the great things Yahweh has done (v. 2). Vv. 4-6, the second half of the psalm, speak of the future. They contain the plea to Yahweh for further 'restoration, repentance or return' to take place. It sees that future restoration also filled with joy. The repetition of the phrases 'restoring of fortunes', and 'shouts of joy' from vv. 1-3 ties the Psalm together. It also underlines that joy in the community is seen as the work of Yahweh.

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

²Then 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."

³The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

⁴Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

⁶Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Philippians 3:4-14 (J.B. Phillips New Testament) Shirley Luttrell

Just two verses earlier Paul had warned about "the dogs" and "the circumcision". The target of his attack was not so much Jews, as Jewish Christians, who dispute Paul's legitimacy and object to his interpretation of scripture. They demanded that scripture and its commands be seen as infallible and saw Paul as watering down God's word in the interests of winning people to his way. It was in their estimation, cheap evangelism, selling the gospel short. Paul, for his part, saw their literalist fundamentalism as one of the very things which stood in the way of true faith and from which people needed to be liberated. Paul is not always exemplary in his handling of such conflicts. They generated a lot of heat, both in his day and in the ministry of Jesus - just as they often

do in the church today. So here we meet the passionate Paul. What he is passionate and positive about comes to the fore in our passage. First, he asserts that, if he must, he can match their claims (3:4-6). He was as zealous as they are – rooted in his prior biblical fundamentalism - all that they boast about: a true Jew, a true Israelite. Then comes the twist: zeal, yes, but that was a zeal which attacked Christ and his church. On their terms he was blameless, because he was a blameless observer of all the commandments. Can one be a blameless devotee of scripture and at the same time an enemy of Christ? Paul would say a very definite: yes! Fanatical devotion which loses perspective and blindly follows beliefs and maxims, even when they are scriptural, is dangerous, because it may generate rivalry and in the name of God perpetuate violence.

I was even more of a Jew than these Jews, yet knowing Christ has changed my whole life

⁴⁻⁶ If it were right to have such confidence, I could certainly have it, and if any of these men thinks he has grounds for such confidence I can assure him I have more. I was born a true Jew, I was circumcised on the eighth day, I was a member of the tribe of Benjamin, I was in fact a full-blooded Jew. As far as keeping the Law is concerned, I was a Pharisee, and you can judge my enthusiasm for the Jewish faith by my active persecution of the Church. As far as the Law's righteousness is concerned, I don't think anyone could have found fault with me.

⁷⁻¹¹ Yet every advantage that I had gained I considered lost for Christ's sake. Yes, and I look upon everything as loss compared with the overwhelming gain of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For his sake I did in actual fact suffer the loss of everything, but I considered it useless rubbish compared with being able to win Christ. For now my place is in him, and I am not dependent upon any of the self-achieved righteousness of the Law. God has given me that genuine righteousness which comes from faith in Christ. How changed are my ambitions! Now I long to know Christ and the power shown by his resurrection: now I long to share his sufferings, even to die as he died, so that I may perhaps attain as he did, the resurrection from the dead.

¹²⁻¹⁴ Yet, my brothers, I do not consider myself to have "arrived", spiritually, nor do I consider myself already perfect. But I keep going on, grasping ever more firmly that purpose for which Christ grasped me. My brothers, I do not consider myself to have fully grasped it even now. But I do concentrate on this: I leave the past behind and with

hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the goal—my reward the honour of being called by God in Christ.

The word of the Lord'

Thanks be to God

John 12:1-11 (J.B. Phillips New Testament) Philip Southwell

It was an old story. Both Mark and John link it to Jesus' last days, Mark and Matthew in Bethany in the house of Simon, the leper, just after Jesus' final arrival in Jerusalem, John, just before, in Bethany at the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. The allusion to burial probably helped make the connection. Luke has a similar story in the house of Simon the Pharisee, perhaps a variant, placed much earlier in Jesus' ministry and apparently in Galilee (7:36-50). Something is happening wherever the story is told; and doubtless something happened to generate the story. For John there are two starkly contrasting responses to Jesus. The objection in all the stories (except Luke) is the waste of resources. Caring about the poor meant caring about the bottom line. It looks like Jesus is taking the side of the rich ornamented cathedral against those pleading for money for social justice. Some will be comfortable seeing here Jesus claiming his worthiness to be the recipient of lavish expenditure: 'you won't always have me around.' But the real focus is the woman. Can we not let her response stand? It is not that we should see it as stroking the ego of Jesus, but rather as indicative of her response, indeed, to God. A person is responding to love and acceptance. It is not the time to talk budgets, but to value the person. It was similar last week with the Prodigal: for the father it was the time for tears of joy, for running down the road and embracing. Here in our story, now is the time to be glad for human vulnerability. Vulnerability is the other side of the compassion of Jesus.

12 ¹⁻⁵ Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the village of Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. They gave a supper for him there, and Martha waited on the party while Lazarus took his place at table with Jesus. Then Mary took a whole pound of very expensive perfume and anointed Jesus' feet and then wiped them with her hair. The entire house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot (the man who was going to betray Jesus), burst out, "Why on earth wasn't this perfume sold? It's worth thirty pounds, which could have been given to the poor!"

⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was dishonest, and when he was in charge of the purse used to help himself to the contents.

7-8 But Jesus replied to this outburst, “Let her alone, let her keep this for the day of my burial. You have the poor with you always—you will not always have me!”

9-11 The large crowd of Jews discovered that he was there and came to the scene—not only because of Jesus but to catch sight of Lazarus, the man whom he had raised from the dead. Then the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus as well, because he was the reason for many of the Jews’ going away and putting their faith in Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Christ

Some thoughts... about the religious instinct

Let's Give

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
 praise him, all creatures here below,
 praise him above, ye heavenly host,
 praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

Prayer of Dedication

EUCCHARIST

Song: My life flows on in endless song (New Century Hymnal, 476, Endless Song, Robert Lowry, New York 1869)

My life flows on in endless song
 above earth's lamentation,
 I hear the sweet, though far-off hymn
 that hails a new creation
 Through all the tumult and the strife,
 I hear that music ringing.
 It finds an echo in my soul
 How can I keep from singing?

What though my joys and comforts die?
 my Saviour still is living.
 What though the shadows gather round
 a new song Christ is giving.
 No storm can shake my inmost calm
 while to that rock I'm clinging
 Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth
 How can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble sick with fear
 and hear their death knells ringing
 When friends rejoice both far and near
 how can I keep from singing?
 In prison cell and dungeon vile
 our thoughts to them are winging.
 When friends by shame are undefiled, how can I keep from singing?

I lift my eyes, the cloud grows thin
 I see the blue above it
 And day by day this pathway smooths,
 since first I learned to love it.
 The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart
 A fountain ever springing.
 All things are mine since I am Christ's,
 How can I keep from singing?

Invitation

This is the table of the Lord.
 It is to be made ready for those who love him and who want to love
 him more.

So, come, you who have much faith and you who have little, you who
 have been here often and you who have not been for a long time, you
 who have tried to follow and you who have failed.

It is our Lord who invites you.
 It is his will that those who want him should meet him here.

The Story

Now let us hear the story of how this sacrament began.

On the night on which Jesus was betrayed, he sat at supper with his disciples. While they were eating, he took a piece of bread, said a blessing, broke it and gave it to them with the words, 'This is my body. It is broken for you. Do this to remember me.'

Later on, he took a cup of wine, saying, 'This cup is God's new covenant, sealed, with my blood. Drink from it, all of you, to remember me.'

So now, following Jesus' example and command, we take this bread and this wine, the ordinary things of the world which Christ will make special. And as he said a prayer before sharing, let us do so too.

Prayer of Gratitude and Concern

Gratitude, praise, hearts lifted high,
voices full and joyful...these you deserve God.

For when we were nothing you made us something; When we had no name and no faith and no future.

You called us to be your children;
When we lost our way or turned away,
you did not abandon us;
When we came back to you,
your arms opened wide in welcome.
And look, you prepare a table for us
offering not just bread, not just wine,
but your very self
so that we may be filled, forgiven, healed, blessed, and made new
again.
You are worth all our pain and all our praise.

So, we join our voices to those of the church on earth and in heaven
and say

(We sing)

***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***

Lord God, as we come to share the richness of your table
we cannot forget the rawness of the earth.

We cannot take bread and forget those who are hungry.

Your world is one world and we are stewards of its nourishment.

Lord, put our prosperity at the service of the poorest of the earth

We cannot take wine and forget those who are thirsty. The ground
and the rootless, the earth and its weary people cry out for justice.

Lord, put our fullness at the service of the empty

We cannot hear your words of peace
and forget the world at war.

Or, if not at war, then preparing for it.

***Show us quickly, Lord, how to turn weapons into welcome signs
and the lust for power into a desire for peace***

We cannot celebrate the feast of your family and forget our divisions.
We are one in Spirit but not in fact; history and hurt still dismember us.

Lord, heal your church in every brokenness.

Prayer of Consecration

Lord Jesus Christ, present with us now,

for all that you have done and all that you have promised.

What have we to offer?

Our hands are empty,

our hearts are sometimes full of wrong things.

We are not fit to gather up the crumbs from under your table.

But with you is mercy

and the power to change us.

Send down your Holy Spirit on us
and on these gifts of bread and wine
that they may become for us your body,
healing, forgiving and making us whole;
so that we may become, for you, your body,
loving and caring in the world until your kingdom comes.

Amen.

Among friends, gathered round a table,
Jesus took bread, broke it and said,
“This is my body: it’s broken – for you.”

And later he took the cup of wine and said,
“This is the new relationship with God
made possible because of my death.
Take this – all of you.”

***Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy
upon us.***

***Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy
upon us.***

***O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, grant us your
peace.***

Look, look, here is your Lord coming to you in bread and wine.

These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

Bread and wine are distributed among the people

We come forward as a family to partake of the elements together at the Communion Table. The cup on the right-hand side as you face the table is unfermented grape juice and the cup on the left-hand side is alcoholic wine.

Concluding Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you have put your life in our hands,
now we put our lives in yours.

Take us, shake us, remake us.

May we become as God-like as you are human

Amen

Prayers of the People

Jeremy Kim

The one who prays offers the following words at the end of each series of petitions, "May we live religiously and ethically". The people respond, "To integrate heaven and earth".

Lord's Prayer

***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 forever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여
이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며
나라이 임하옵시며
뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이
땅에서도 이루어지이다.
오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고
우리가 우리에게
죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이
우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고
우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고
다만 악에서 구하옵소서

대개 나라와 권세와 영광이
아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

Song: We are Called (As One Voice, Vol II, 60, David Haas)

Come! live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom of the city of God!

Refrain

We are called to act with justice.
We are called to love tenderly.
We are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God.

Come! Open your heart!
Show your mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless,
so all hatred and blindness will be no more!

Refrain

Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of that great day when all will be one!
God will reign and we'll walk with each other as sisters
and brothers united in love!

Refrain

Blessing

May we wait, seeing everything with new eyes,
May we discern the spirits within us and among us
And channel our desire for *Christ's* purposes

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Amen

Closing Musical Meditation: May the feet of God (TiS 779, Aubrey, Aubrey Podlich)

Closing Postlude

Pianist:

Rosemary Osborne