

Worship at Home for Sunday 6th April 2025 with Mary Winchcombe

Call to Worship:

Loving God, we draw near to you, trusting not in any goodness of our own, but in your grace and love, your unfailing, overflowing mercy. Open our hearts to all you say, and our lives to all you would do, by your grace and to your glory. Amen

STF 24 Come Now is the Time to Worship

Come, now is the time to worship, Come, now is the time to give your heart, Come, just as you are to worship, Come, just as you are before your God, Come

One day every tongue will confess You are God, One day every knee will bow, Still the greatest treasure remains for those, Who gladly choose You now

Repeat the first verse

Prayers:

Loving and gracious God, in this time of worship may we sense your presence near. May we find space and time to look around us and see beauty: in nature and the seasons; in people around us; in a word of welcome; in a smile, a hug, or a handshake. May we find forgiveness for the things we do wrong: a word spoken out of turn; a word we failed to speak; an action we regret; someone we have failed to greet and meet. May we find ourselves put back together and renewed in strength on our continuing Lenten journey. May the stories we hear and share be an inspiration. O God, be near us. Amen.

Reading: John 12: 1-8

Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. ² A dinner was prepared in Jesus' honour. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate ¹ with him. ³ Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar¹ of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.⁴ But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, ⁵ "That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor." ⁶ Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself. ⁷ Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. ⁸

You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.

Reflection:

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem for Passover, where he knows that he will be arrested; and in our reading we find him in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

Most people would arrive several days early, in order to make preparations and would have been heading for the Temple. The necessary preparations for Passover are about getting into the right state of purity, to be able to participate in the festival.

But Jesus has his own arrangements for this! – not in the Jerusalem Temple, where all the other pilgrims will go, but in another temple, made out of the home of his friends in Bethany.

Meals and celebrations were very important in Jesus' life. His ministry began with a wedding feast, and his last act before his arrest was supper with his disciples. Now, as Passover approaches, his friends in Bethany give a meal in his honour, unwittingly marking the end of his ministry.

Did Jesus know what was going to happen that evening? We're not told. I imagine his disciples were just looking forward to a relaxing evening with friends and plenty of Martha's delicious food.

But Mary, broke all the rules. **She** invaded the male dominion of the Passover room with her expensive jar of pure nard, her most precious possession; yet she didn't hesitate to pour it all out for Jesus.

She anointed him with her precious oil, and the whole 'house' was filled with its fragrance.

At the centre of this story is love, Mary's love for Jesus. Her actions offer at least three lessons in love. Firstly, Mary demonstrated unselfish love. Her perfume was valuable; she used it all.

Secondly, Mary was unassuming. It was customary for a host to anoint a guest's head, but only a slave would wash the feet. Just as Mary had in Luke 10 once sat at Jesus' feet listening intently, she now sat at his feet serving humbly. Finally, Mary was unselfconscious in her love; she untied her hair, as a lady never did in public, and used it to dry the Master's feet. She didn't care what others thought. She simply wanted to love Jesus. And she did it extravagantly.

'The house was filled with the fragrance', Every conversation was affected by the strong perfume, a token of love that could not be ignored.

And then, from Jesus, we learn an amazing lesson about the willingness to receive. William Temple, a renowned preacher and writer once commented: 'Humility doesn't begin with the giving of service; it begins with our readiness to receive it.'

Jesus defended Mary, he accepted, appreciated, and affirmed Mary's gesture of love, and he did so without embarrassment or excuse. Jesus understood about love in action. He was about to surpass her act by his extravagant love, shown on the cross, the greatest gift of all – the gift of himself.

Judas' love was not so pure. He protested on behalf of the poor, but John spoke of his greed.

Could Judas have been feeling threatened by Mary's actions? Her actions were deeply personal and raw. This was an intimacy Judas could not afford if he was to betray Jesus.

The story of Jesus's meal with Martha, Mary and Lazarus presents us with the challenge

"Where are we in this picture?"

Are we with Mary, worshipping Jesus with all she's got, risking the anger of her sister who's doing all the hard work, the anger of the men who she's made uncomfortable by her actions, and the sneer of Judas who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Unlike the people in that room we know what Judas went on to do - we have the hindsight of his betrayal of Jesus.

Some of the people present might have agreed with Judas's opinion that the money for the oil could be better spent?

Or are we back in the kitchen with Martha?

Today is the beginning of Passiontide and we've read about Mary's passionate action

We see the passionate love of God in creating the world, his passion in forgiving our blindness and wickedness, and that passion led him to risk so much in sending his Son. Are we as passionate about Him as he is about us?

Maybe that's something we need to contemplate and pray about.

May God bless us all as we seek to walk with Him and do his will.

Our Prayers for Others:

Gracious God we bring to you our broken world, so full of injustice and exploitation, suffering and sorrow, hatred and division.

We pray for all who work for peace;
all who strive to bring help and healing,
hope and wholeness.

Loving God bring healing and renewal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer ☐

STF 338 There is a Redeemer

There is a redeemer, Jesus, God's own son, Precious Lamb of God,
Messiah, Holy One

Thank you oh my father, For giving us your son, and leaving your spirit
'Til the work on earth is done

Jesus my redeemer, Name above all names
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Oh, for sinners slain.

When I stand in glory, I will see his face
And there I'll serve my King for ever, In that holy place.

Blessing:

Give time to that which matters most.

Share your gifts with those who need the most

Show your gratitude to those who have blessed you the most,

Be still with the one who loves you the most and live the now of every
moment and every day to the glory of God. **Amen**