

Now Jesus returns to Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, a mere three kilometres (two miles) east of Jerusalem. "Perfume made of pure nard" (v. 3, spikenard oil), was derived from the roots of a plant grown in the Himalayas. If the guests were reclining on couches, Jesus' feet would be accessible for anointing, but a respectable Jewish woman would hardly appear in public with her hair unbound. Judas' reaction points forward to Jesus' arrest (18:1-11). "Three hundred denarii" (v. 5) was close to a year's wages for a labourer. Anointing was the last step before burial, but not for executed criminals. Perhaps in v. 7 Jesus means that Mary bought the perfume so as to have it ready for his burial, that what she did has a meaning she does not realize, and that the perfume is not wasted. Perhaps v. 8 says: the poor are constantly in need, but Jesus' impending death is unique. There is a place for spontaneous love of Jesus.
© 1996-2022 Chris Haslam



The 5th Sunday of Lent 2022

(Year C)

~ Notices ~

Ukraine

The Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal has launched a special appeal encouraging all parishes in Ireland to have a special collection this/next Sunday to support the appeal. To donate please use the link on our website: <https://clareanglicans.ie> or go direct to: www.christianaid.ie

The Jesus Prayer

As a Lenten prayer, but also one of solidarity with the Ukrainian people (who are largely Orthodox Christians) you are invited to say the Jesus Prayer as a meditation during Lent. Leaflets are at the back of church, and available in the prayer section of the website. Millions of Ukrainians will be saying this prayer as the bombs and missiles fall.

Our Lenten Journey walk

Sue continues to lead an ecumenical walk in Lees Road Woods every Saturday during Lent, starting at 11.30am in the car park. Come and join her, or walk on your own, or walk at a place of your choice, for around an hour. Sue is walking the route as part of a plan to complete 100 miles in March to support the Irish Hospice Foundation.

- Future events -

Clare Music Makers Festival Sat 9th – Sun 10th April.
Saturday 9.00 - 5.00pm, Sunday 1.00pm – 5.00pm

Consairtín: National Concertina Convention
Thurs 21st – Sat 23rd April from 2.00pm each day

'Beloved' – Friday 13th May at 8.00pm
An evening concert of Arias and Song with soprano, Helen Hancock and pianist, Mark Keane.

Enthronement of +Michael Burrows, Kilfenora Cathedral
Sunday 22nd May 4.00pm – all welcome.
(We will need to organise a cleaning party to make ready – if you are able to help please let me know – refreshments provided).

Website: clareanglicans.ie

YouTube: www.youtube.com/c/clareanglicans

Facebook: www.facebook.com/clare.anglicans

Rector: Email: frkevinobrien@me.com Tel: 065 672 4721

New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org> The Common Worship psalter is © The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, 2000.

Collect God of compassion, you bestow your love on our poverty of heart: inspire us to give without stint, to lose life, that we might find it again, so the world will be filled with the fragrance of your love, through Jesus Christ, who offers himself for us. **Amen**

Suggested Hymns - For the online service you might like to view these hymns with lyrics on YouTube.

- 1) Lift High the Cross
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbcBXYP4AIE>
- 2) Praise to the Holiest in the Height
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIBgTmiJCPI>
- 3) My Song is Love Unknown
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWRcAa-nFIA>
- 4) Take up Thy Cross, the Saviour said (599)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OS3q4uTEAik>

Isaiah 43.16-21

Thus says the Lord,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
who brings out chariot and horse,
army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
The wild animals will honour me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

Psalms 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
Then 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.'
The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.
Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Philippians 3.4b-14

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew

born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

Post Communion Prayer

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. **Amen**

Commentary

Isaiah 43:16-21

Babylonian armies captured Jerusalem in 587 BC; many residents were deported to Babylon. Chapters 40 to 55 of Isaiah were written there in the final years of the Exile. The author had great faith in God as intervening in human affairs when needed throughout history. He sustains the theme of a new Exodus throughout Second Isaiah: God will surely restore the Israelites to Judea (v. 14).

A prophet serves as a channel of communication between the divine and the human realms. Today we say that history repeats itself; this prophet would add: continually. In vv. 16-17, he recalls God's saving act of enabling the Israelites to cross the Reed (or Red) Sea: how the waters separated, providing "a way in the sea", and how the Egyptian chariots, "army and warrior[s]", were swallowed up by the waters, "never to rise again" (Revised English Bible). This is who God is: he was the motive force behind Israel's deliverance; he saved Israel from slavery. (Perhaps the audience is people who, in exile, have given up on God.) But, says God through the prophet (v. 18), do not wallow in the past to the extent of being blind to what is happening now! God is "about to do a new thing" (v. 19); in fact, he has already begun ("now").

Can't you see it? He is providing a godly way for his people, protecting them and giving them sustenance ("water", "drink", v. 20). The allusion is to return from exile across the Arabian desert: the animals who will honour God live in the desert. Israel, the people whom he moulded by his instruction and discipline ("formed", v. 21) are to declare to all that he is praise-worthy for his love and actions on their behalf. However, say vv. 22-25, the covenant relationship between God and his people has become one of weariness for, in spite of God being reasonable in his expectations as to how the people should honour him, the Israelites have ignored him. All they have done is complain and stray from his ways. Even so, God is merciful; he will forget their waywardness.

Psalm 126

This is a prayer for deliverance from national misfortune. Vv. 1-3 recall past events: it was a joyous occasion when God showed favour towards his people ("Zion"), almost beyond belief (although "those who dream" can be translated as those healed.) Other nations recognized what God had done for Israel (v. 2). Then the community prays that God may grant them his favour once again: may it spring up, as the parched dry wadis ("watercourses", v. 4) in the "Negeb" desert rush with water during the seasonal rains. Perhaps v. 5 is a proverb: may our fortunes be reversed! V. 6 expands on v. 5. The good times remembered may be the Exodus or the return from Exile; if the latter, it reminds us that life in Palestine was difficult: it took years to restore agriculture.

Philippians 3:4b-14

Paul has warned his readers about those who try to convince them that being a Christian requires acceptance of Jewish law, including circumcision. True circumcision is of the heart – and not of the "flesh", i.e. following legal precepts, as in Judaism. Inner circumcision is what is required of us.

He cites his own experience as an example. In early life, he was as true to Judaism as anyone could be: he was circumcised; he is from the elite tribe ("Benjamin", v. 5), as Jewish as one can be ("a Hebrew born of Hebrews"); like other Pharisees, he knew the Law well and applied it in daily life. He zealously persecuted Christians and faultlessly kept the Law. And yet, knowing Christ has made him realize that a Jewish, law-based, approach to God is a "loss" (vv. 7-8) for Christians: it obstructs God's free gift of love. True "righteousness" (v. 9) comes through "faith in Christ", not self-assessment of godliness, per legal precepts. He has cast aside all his Jewishness in order to realize the gain Christ offers (v. 8).

He wants to "know Christ" (v. 10) as risen and living. This involves attaining oneness with him through sharing his sufferings and participating in his death. Out of this, he will come to know "the power of his resurrection". He is still working on understanding Christ completely (v. 12), an obligation he has – for Christ has chosen him ("made me his own").

He has made progress not on his own, but through God's grace (v. 13); however he has left his past behind and eagerly seeks what lies ahead. As the winner in a Greek foot race was called up to receive his "prize" (v. 14), so he seeks God's call to share in eternal life. ("Heavenly" is literally upward.)

John 12:1-8

Jesus has raised Martha's and Mary's brother, "Lazarus", "from the dead", because Martha trusts that Jesus is the Messiah. Many people are making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover. The religious authorities, aware that Jesus has performed "many signs" (11:47), and afraid that the Romans will destroy the Temple and the nation because of him, ask that anyone knowing where he is tell them so they can arrest him.