

Sunday 6th April 2025: CIRCUIT BIG SUNDAY!

Churches throughout the Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit, and the morning online service via the Zoom platform, are using this material today. The YouTube recording of the worship sheet is also available (on the Watton Methodist website from the 25th for use by individuals and churches. The zoom link is <https://zoom.us/j/96696933272?pwd=AbgaXc30rO8X2yISufgcYRtH7bXOW1.1> Passcode 951957



Words of welcome from Derek:

A very warm welcome to our Easter BIG SUNDAY Worship. Ordinarily we would hold BIG SUNDAY on the fifth Sunday of the month but on this plan the fifth Sunday was Mothering Sunday. Traditionally Mothering Sunday has been the day when people return to their mother Church and more recently it has become a day when families like to be together, also several of our churches have invited preachers, so we decided to move on a week. Traditionally the fifth Sunday in Lent is referred to as Passion Sunday and is a day that we reflect on the passion of Christ before we face Palm Sunday next week and then start our journey through Holy Week and on to the events of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Day. I hope that you find this time of worship part of your Lenten journey this year.

Opening liturgy

Give us this day our daily bread to cement our friendship...

That we may feel loved, wanted, needed, cared for, that we may offer love and care where it is needed.

Give us this day our daily bread to cement our friendship...

That we may live companionably with you our soul friend, that we may live companionably with our friends and neighbours.

Give us this day our daily bread to cement our friendship...

That together with you we can be love and hope for others, that together we are there for each other.

O Lord our God, on this Lenten journey, **be our friend, let us be friends and let us be be-friended, we pray. Amen.**

HYMN 331: King of kings, majesty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9IYMRJ4BZs>

Opening Prayers – Led by Mrs Sue Lloyd

A prayer of adoration

Creator God, you who love us more than we can know, who chose us from the very beginning to be family and never lets us go, we praise and adore you.

Jesus Christ, Son of God, who lived a human life that we may have a shining example, and was sacrificed for us, we praise and adore you.

Holy Spirit, present and power in our lives, from the moment that we first believed, leading and guiding us, we praise your holy name.

A prayer of Confession

Mindful of Mary and Judas, and all that took place that night, we take a moment of silence to think about times we have been critical of those who act in ways that we do not, or when we have condemned the way others spend their time or their money.

silence,

Gracious God, as Mary showed her love for you by anointing your feet with perfume, so may we – who know your feet will soon walk the dreadful road to Calvary – anoint them with the perfume of sorrow at our part in your suffering.

Forgive those things we have done which have caused you sadness, and those things we should have done that would have brought you joy. As we continue our Lenten journey, lead us to the Cross and meet us there. **Amen**

A prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty God, thank you for your amazing power at work in our lives, for your goodness and for your blessings over us.

Thank you that you are able to bring hope through even the toughest of times, giving us the strength to carry on.

Thank you for your great love and care, mercy and grace.

Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us.

But most of all we thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life.

Forgive us for when we don't thank you enough, for who you are and all that you do.

Renew our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy.

We give you praise and thanks, for You alone are worthy. Amen.

The Lord's prayer:

Our Father who art in heaven

Hallowed be thy Name

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us,

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen

Bible Reading: John 12:1-8

Mary Anoints Jesus

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.'

HYMN:

God we sense you peace and power

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arrL89tf4Ug>

God, we sense your peace and power

In this place we love so much.

We are moved by gentle fragrance;

We are blessed by healing touch.

In these pews we hear the gospel;

We see life beyond compare.

Here we gather at your table,

Tasting love in meals we share.

Jesus taught, and crowds went with him;

They knew illness, grief and strife.

Twelve years sick, a suffering woman

Hoped his touch would change her life.

Jesus stopped to heal and bless her;

He healed Jairus' daughter, too.

God we seek your gift of healing;

Touch our lives and make us new.

God, your gift of touch can heal us

Through a hug or kind embrace.

When we share the peace you give us,
It can change us, by your grace.
When we offer prayers for healing,
Laying hands on those in need,
By your loving, gentle caring,
Those who hurt are blessed and freed.

Monologue:

Led By Rev Jonny Bell

Mary Anoints Jesus Christ – A monologue from a disciple

It clings to my nostrils – it still overwhelms my sense of smell – that extravagance of her offering! The shocking waste chucked all over the floor! Thousands and thousands of pounds wasted in a fraction of a second – about what any of us makes in a year, before tax! Yet you scolded us for considering it a waste – why?! How on earth could you think that?!

You mentioned before that you would be going to a place where we could not follow. Is she... is she anointing you for your death? Is this why it isn't a waste? Is it because you will be dying? So much plenty, so much goodness. So, how can dying be a part of that? What was Mary thinking?!

Or was she anointing you to be our king? You spoke about getting a donkey for you to ride into Jerusalem. Are you going to save us from the Romans? Showing you to be our king! But this doesn't feel like you, you've always tried to point away from yourself and back to the Father.

Wait. Is that what she was doing? The room flooded with the smell – is this how the Father's love floods the world? So present and so inescapable, if only we were to allow ourselves to be aware of it? Just like the nard, making us heady, is it so with your life, your love, your goodness? When we were with all those people, and you provided us with all that food, there was so much of it left. Mary's perfume was just like this. Does this mean that she gets it more than us? And what is to come must have something to do with this life, this love, this goodness.

But... I don't want to let you go, not yet. I don't think Mary does either. I'm sure that when she wiped your feet with her hair, tears were mixed in with that oil. She really does get it, doesn't she? No wonder you called her the Tower; she sees far beyond what we do.

I understand why she did it now. She was anointing you for what is to come and showed you the same extravagance that you have shown us. I'm sorry I didn't get it at the time. I just hope I can stick with you until the end...

HYMN 713:

Show me how to stand for justice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8CIU66oFMQ>

Reflection

Rev Anne Richardson

The house was filled with fragrance.

What sort of smells do you like? Do you use various products around your home or person with particular scents? Do you use the same one or do you prefer to ring the changes. What fragrances fill your house?

Have you noticed that sometimes a certain scent can take us back in our memories - and trigger our emotions. Have you got a memory tied up with a scent?

I've recently tried a cleaning product which arrives in a small bottle, very concentrated! You pour it into a spray bottle with water, before using to clean around the home. This company do a range of wonderful scents that linger for days. The fragrance is a by-product of course, - the aim of it is to clean the surfaces of dust and grease, leaving it shining! After a few days though the fragrance is gone, and dust starts coming back. I also have an air freshener that hangs in my cupboard under the stairs. It smells a bit musty in here, so the freshener covers up these smells. Every time I open the door; I get a whiff!

Mary's use of the perfume was rather different! I think that, unlike my examples, it probably made a bit of a mess. It may have dripped off Jesus's feet and needed wiping up. Mary was wiping Jesus's feet with her hair and anyone who has had long hair knows that anything on your hair can get on to your clothes or towel. Being expensive stuff the



perfume was probably designed to be used sparingly - not all poured out in one go so it may have been a bit overpowering! It was a gesture that couldn't be ignored or overlooked. All those present would have seen it and smelt it - and perhaps every time afterwards, this sort of perfume triggered this memory. It wasn't something sanitised or just there to cover another less pleasant smell – it reeked!

On this one special occasion, Mary chose to show her love and devotion, her care for Jesus and her grief at his chosen path. She had insight to be able to see ahead to his death, and as always, when you know someone's, death will be soon, she had started to grieve for him. Love and grief are powerful. They touch us deep to our core. They are messy and real.

We know the story of Jesus's death and we know that resurrection came three days later. But Mary couldn't anticipate the joy of Easter Sunday - she was looking only to Good Friday. So, she took the best that she could offer and poured it out in a lavish gift of love and sacrifice, and she didn't bother about what she looked like or what anyone thought - it was an extravagant gesture.

I wonder what Lazarus and Martha thought about this? Lazarus who Jesus raised from the dead. Martha - and the only thing said about her in this section is that she served. Perhaps they knew what Mary was planning but maybe it came as a complete surprise? I can't see Martha approving of Mary's actions, can you? She could have been helping serve supper, but instead here she is at Jesus feet again!

Though maybe Martha had mellowed by then! We know what Judas thought – and we know how Jesus responded. If you had been there, can you imagine how you would have felt? Can you feel the tension, the grief, the scandal of what Mary did?

What would you have done if you were there?

Sometimes extravagant displays of love leave onlookers feeling embarrassed, as if they've stumbled on something that should be private, and they're witnessing an intimate scene.

But the perfume itself! The fragrance filled the house - mingling with the scent of warm bodies and food. Perhaps Lazarus remembered the scent of the graveclothes as he was resurrected, and they unwrapped him. Perhaps Martha remembered washing her brothers' body and anointing it, grieving as they gently wrapped him in the graveclothes. Maybe they all caught a glimpse of the death to come. Death and resurrection, scent bringing a rush of remembrances, anticipating the death of Jesus that will bring eternal life to billions of people.

It's a wonderful story - but how is it relevant to us today?

I think that firstly, it teaches us again about the cost of discipleship, for the only possible response to the death of Jesus is to offer all that we have and are, everything back to the one who loved us so much. It doesn't matter what we look like or how messy we may be - Love so amazing, so divine, demands our souls, our life, our all - we sing it with gusto, but do we give our all? Do we bring everything and pour it out to God? Mary's example challenges us - how do we express our love and thankfulness to God for Jesus? Do we just want to be shiny and clean? Do we want to simply cover up the musty smell of old faith? Or are we prepared to get messy and let our love show itself in every part of our lives as the fragrance fills the house? How will you do this?

What fragrance of your life offered to God will be left?

HYMN: 446:

I Will offer up my life in spirit and truth

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tYEo0DXcIE>

Prayer of the Church: Passion Sunday

God the Son humbled himself, taking on human flesh, suffering and dying in our place. Let us pray to God our Father, and place in his hands the suffering of the world.

We pray for the church, that we may humbly bear our crosses and follow Jesus as our King and Lord.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for preachers and worship leaders entrusted with your holy word, like the priests and scribes. May they preserve the truth of your word and teach and live according to it.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for those who have sinned, like Peter. Teach us to be sorry for our sins, and forgive us all that we do wrong.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for prisoners and criminals like Barrabas. May they find true freedom by changing the way they live.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for all in government, like Pilate and Herod. May they use their power properly, and serve truth and justice.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for those who are dying, like the thieves crucified with Jesus. May they die with Jesus by their side, and be received into your kingdom.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for parents like Mary who have lost a child. May they bear their suffering and know the comfort of your love.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for peace in areas where there is unrest and conflict. Protect our brothers and sisters in Christ in these places. May their neighbours see the Son of God in them.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for the whole human race, that all will come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour, pray for those who hurt them, and forgive them too.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

And we pray for those with special needs who are known to us personally, and whom we now name silently in our hearts... *(brief silence)*

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

Father, may the suffering and death of Jesus lighten the burdens of all who suffer. Lead us in the way of the cross, that as we suffer with Jesus, so we may rise to life in his glory, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Dedication of Offertory

HYMN 287:

When I survey the wondrous cross

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_fvFfPqjO4

Blessing:

May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those we love, this day and always, Amen.

Video

You raised me up

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sza4rh1YzsM>