

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 3rd April 2022
5th Sunday of Lent (available on ☎ 01308 293062)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Hymn: Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

1 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
hold me with thy powerful hand:
bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore.

2 Open now the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar

lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield.

3 When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises
I will ever give to thee.

Arglwydd arwain drwy'r anialwch William Williams (1717-1791) (Public Domain)

As we call to mind our sins, we might remember especially the harsh judgements we sometimes pass on others ... Let us now open ourselves to the compassion of God.

Lord Jesus, you bring pardon and peace to the sinner.

Lord, have mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**

You bind up hearts that are broken.

Christ, have mercy, **Christ, have mercy.**

You bring light to those in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Lord, have mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect (special prayer for today)

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. **Amen**

READINGS

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.

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.'

REFLECTION

In our Gospel story, we meet Jesus and his disciples as they return to his friends' house in Bethany. To start with, we are like a fly on the wall observing a genial domestic scene. It is six days before the Passover when many people would have been heading to Jerusalem for the festival, so Jesus and his friends were doing normal things, and enjoying each other's company.

We have Martha, as ever, doing the work – cooking and serving, her brother, Lazarus, whom Jesus had wept over and raised from the dead, and who was probably still mind-blown by the experience, and Mary, 'the ideal disciple' of Mark's Gospel who sat at Jesus' feet and learned from him. All this reflects back to previous meals, and also presages the Last Supper.

In Mary we see the behaviour of someone who does not count the cost of giving; anointing Jesus' feet, and wiping them with her hair indicate excessiveness and humility. Both Matthew and Mark in their accounts of the anointing of Jesus talk of the oil being applied to his head – a prophetic sign of the Messiah. Here we see Jesus' feet being anointed – a prophetic sign of Jesus' impending death; Mary is anointing Jesus beforehand for his burial. She grasped what Peter and the others could not; that Jesus, their master, was to die, and moreover, that she would be there at the end

And then we have Judas, and his reaction to this scenario. Whilst it is easy for us to criticise or even condemn his comments, particularly because he was all the time lining his own pockets, he surely voices some of our own struggles with what we spend on Church life, and what we spend on the poor. How we would love to be considered like Mary, and use 'being a Judas' as a term of abuse. Yet, we are neither Judas, nor Mary, but a combination of both. In Mary, Christian discipleship is an act of adoration and of gratitude to her Lord. In her silence, Mary draws attention not to herself but to the one she anoints. In Judas, we see Christian discipleship as God's 'justification', his making righteous of those who have denied or betrayed Jesus.

Whilst Mary offers us the model for discipleship, Judas points us to the promise of mercy and forgiveness. The grace of Jesus Christ includes both the faithful and the unfaithful. No-one is beyond the love and mercy of Christ. And we are all, whoever we are, wherever we are, and whatever we have done drawn to, and welcomed into the bright transforming light that the cross spreads into the darkness of our world. Amen

Prayers

God is present with us now. Let us bring him our prayers and concerns for the Church and for the world.

Loving God, breathe your life into the Church, so that we speak your love to the world, and are willing to suffer and prepared for sacrifice.

Lord, through your love, **transform our lives.**

Loving God, breathe peace into the world so that we work together co-operatively, sensitive to one another's needs and differences. In particular, we pray for peace in Ukraine.

Lord, through your love, **transform our lives.**

Loving God, breathe your patience and forgiveness into our homes and all our relationships, so that we learn to cherish and respect one another and act with generosity.

Lord, through your love, **transform our lives.**

Loving god, breathe your encouragement into every suffering and sadness, so that dark and painful times become places of strong spiritual growth.

Lord, through your love, **transform our lives.**

Loving God, breathe your welcome deep into the souls of the dying, so that death is only the door leading to the joy of eternal life with you.

Lord, through your love, **transform our lives.**

Loving God, breathe your grace into our knowing and our feeling, so that we rejoice each step of the way, whatever the terrain.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Gathering together all our prayers, we say the prayer that Jesus gave us

**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,
for ever and ever.
Amen**

Hymn: Father, hear the prayer we offer

1 Father, hear the prayer we offer:
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.

3 Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would smite the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.

2 Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.

4 Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.

Love Maria Willis (nee Whitcomb) (1824-1908), Samuel Longfellow (1819-1892) (Public Domain)

*We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to
be with us now*

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

We pray God's blessing on each other

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and those whom you love and pray for, this day and for evermore.

Amen