

HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH METCALFE, ON.

APRIL 3, 2022 LENT 5

Reverend Michael Fleming

Fr. Michael: As we near the gates of the Holy City, we acknowledge that the sacred space in which we worship and the homes in which we live lie in the unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin peoples.

People: **May we share the land and live in the spirit of reconciliation and shalom.**

Fr. Michael: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The Lord has made a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters.

People: **God is doing a new thing!**

Fr. Michael: Our mouths will be filled with laughter, our tongues with shouts of joy.

People: **God is doing a new thing!**

Fr. Michael: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

People: **God is doing a new thing!**

Fr. Michael: May those who go out weeping come home with shouts of joy.

People: **God is doing a good thing!** (from Liturgy and Hymns by Stephen M. Fearing 2018)

Fr. Michael. Come, let us continue our Lenten journey. As community called and gathered in this sacred space, we pray, Almighty God,

People: **to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden.**

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fr. Michael: As we see the Holy City on the horizon, three times we say

People: **Holy God, holy and mighty, holy immortal one, have mercy on us.**

Fr. Michael: Gracious God, as Palm Sunday and Holy Week approach, keep us patient as we continue our Lenten journey. Keep us mindful of the new things you are doing among us. Keep us hopeful of the future you have planned for us. Keep us focused on the journey to which you called your Son and to which you call us today.

Amen (from Liturgy and Hymns Stephen M. Fearing 2016)

Fr. Michael: Most merciful God, by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, you created humanity anew. May the power of his victorious cross transform those who turn in faith to him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Amen

Reader: A reading from the prophet Isaiah (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.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: The days ahead are dark and full of foreboding.

People: **We watch as Jesus continues to the cross.**

Reader: There is no way to change what is to come.

People: **Yet death does not have the final word.** Reader: Let us bear witness to God's new life moving within and among us.

People: **God is doing a new thing; let us rejoice and give thanks!**

Reader: Today, we share Psalm 126.

When God restored our fortunes, it seemed too good to be true.

People: **Then laughter filled our mouths and we sang songs of joy.**

Reader: Seeing our delight, those watching us said, "God has done great things for them. "

People: **God has indeed done great things for us! God is our gladness!**

Reader: O God, keep restoring our fortunes, like streams watering the desert. May all those who sow in tears soon reap with shouts of joy!

People: **May she who has gone forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, come home rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves of harvest.** (from Swallow's Nest by Marchienne Vroon Rienstra 10992)

Reader: A reading from Paul's letter to the people at Philippi (Philippians 3: 4-14)

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 toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: O God, you were ever with Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem, guiding his choices and strengthening his courage each step of the way. As your beloved children, be with us and strengthen us on our journey. Through our time of worship and our companionship with one another, teach us to recognize Christ in everyone we meet. Help us to offer holy hospitality and be a blessing to others, wherever it is needed and free us from all fears of scarcity so that we may share of our abundance.

Amen (from Worship Elements 2022)

Holy Gospel

Fr. Michael: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the blessed St. John (John 12:1-8)

People: **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

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."

Fr. Michael: The Gospel of Christ.

People: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Homily - Contrary Mary

Last week, I spoke about one of the most beloved of the stories that Jesus told, all about a man and his sons – of how one took off and in so doing, destroyed the family; of a time of longing and waiting and ultimately of homecoming. It is the story we know as The Prodigal Son and we all assume that the word PRODIGAL refers to some form of repentance and restoration. But, the word actually means something quite different. While the narrative is all about repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and acceptance, the story is about the prodigal behaviours of the father and the young son, for the word actually means “lavish or extravagant behaviour” – the son engaged in a negative form of lavish living while wasting his inheritance and his life; the father showed his extravagant nature in the way he first gave up everything for his boys and then forgave the wayward son and welcomed him home with the wildest party ever!

Throughout the gospels, there are characters that seem to just drift in and out of the narrative of Jesus’ life. This morning, we share the story of one such cast member – her name is Mary and she lives in the small village of Bethany on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem with her sister Martha and her brother Lazarus – yes the same one who was raised from the dead. Each time Mary appears in the good news chronicle, she becomes a “teaching moment” for Jesus. In Luke, we read of the relationship between the two sisters which sounds so normal, so natural what with sibling rivalries and all that--of Martha complaining that Mary doesn’t foot her share of the housework and seems to waste her time dreaming and listening to Jesus- Jesus tells Martha that what EACH of them is doing is of such great value for the kingdom and that both thinkers and doers are essential for the work of the gospel. Earlier in John’s version of the gospel, Mary sends word to Jesus about the sudden death of her brother Lazarus and begs him to come to be with the family. When he arrives, Jesus meets each of the sisters who have different takes on his absence – Martha is highly critical and angry at Jesus for not being with his friend at the time of death; Mary’s response is not so much anger as sadness, that Jesus did not have the opportunity to say goodbye to his old friend.

But what is centred upon this morning is the time when Mary anoints Jesus. While the narrative changes between John’s and Matthew’s versions of the story, the central act remains consistent: Mary pours expensive oils over the feet of Jesus and then wipes his feet with her hair. It is for this reason that I refer to her as “Mary, Mary quite contrary”, for this woman goes against the cultural norms and the proper protocols of her day in order to be present to her friend Jesus and to honour him.

Before looking at how she breaks all the rules, we need to understand the setting of the story: Jesus is being honoured by the sisters and Lazarus at a lavish dinner-party which Martha more likely than not prepared all by herself. Perhaps it is their way of thanking him for bringing Lazarus back from the dead. Or it could simply have been what was called a symposium – a gathering over a meal where a special invitee would be asked after the meal to share wisdom with the guests (your original after – dinner speaker). The folk would be lying on pillows in a circle or semi-circle during the feasting and then sit up for the speech. Space was always left near the walls of the room for neighbours and other uninvited persons to watch the proceedings and there was one cardinal rule for those observing –

they could be seen but NOT HEARD. They were to simply listen to the conversation but not participate in the discussion which would follow.

At this point of the meal, Mary and Martha would more than likely be standing with the observers, for women were not allowed to take part in the conversation and thus they would fall under the protocols of the crowd....except Mary! She breaks from the crowd, approaches Jesus and kneels before him - rule one broken! She withdraws from under her outfit an alabaster jar and the moment she opens it, the room is flooded with the sweet smell of a powerful perfume which she then proceeds to pour over Jesus' feet instead of over his head and beard which is the behaviour acceptable at an anointing - rule two shattered! Then, she removes the comb and the ribbons that have held her hair in place and the guests watch with aghastness as her thick hair tumbles and cascades over her shoulders and down her back - only women of the street were seen with their hair loose in public and certainly not a young lady of means and status in the village - there went protocol three!

Wiping someone's feet after they have been washed was the work of the least of the slaves of a household, and certainly not that of the mistress of the manor and thus for the fourth moment in a very short period of time, Mary snubs her nose at her culture. For her, honouring Jesus was far more important than playing the social games of her people.

What she does is an incredibly extravagant thing - in the wiping of the feet of her friend, she assumes the role of a servant-slave, knowing that this will cause all sorts of distress and tongue-wagging among her social peers and jeopardize for all time not only her place in the community, but also that of her siblings. The family would be ruined by such breaches of etiquette and frankly, good taste....but Mary places her love for Jesus over whatever the community thinks. In the loosening of her hair, she indicates that what she is doing is something from the very heart of her being and that she is willing to die socially in order to be faithful. She uses a very expensive and rare ointment which would normally have been saved for the anointing of a wedding couple and certainly not for such a demeaning act as foot-washing. Jesus was to follow her example a little later on the night of the Passover Seder in Jerusalem by doing the same to his disciples, thus setting the bar incredibly high, showing his community that their first duty was to serve others, to lower themselves in order for others to be raised up.

Judas doesn't get this as he whines that she has wasted a great deal of money which, in his self-righteousness, claims could have been used to support the ministry. Jesus tells Judas and the others that those in need come first and that sacrifice may be required to fulfill the kingdom mandate to "love first."

I could go on and on about this story but let me just try to put it into our situation some two thousand years later - we still have debate about the use of our resources, whatever those may be - is the maintenance of property of greater import than enacting ministry?; is the reputation of the community of greater value than the work the community undertakes; how are our priorities as a family of God determined and do we ever ask ourselves, as the title of a rewriting of Charles Sheldon's book, "In His Steps" and given the shorter title, "What Would Jesus Do?" and then act out of that perspective rather than "What will the neighbours say?"

As we move towards the next phase of our diocesan undertaking The Shape of Parish Ministry, it would be good for us to reflect upon the story of Mary and Jesus and the extravagant prodigal actions of these two servant-slaves of God.

Fr. Michael: Faith means betting your life that something is true. For two thousand years, the Church has bet her life as she says, I believe in One God

People: **the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth**

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

**was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen**

Reader: You, O God, love us from the moment of our conception; you know us and you love us in the womb. You love us and call us from before the moment of our first breath and you love us when we see the light of day. As a father and a mother love their child before they ever see it, so you love us – and we thank you. Help us, dear Lord, to love one another in this way.

People: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader: You love us, O God, from the time of our naming; you love us in our growing and as we take our first steps. You love us and you walk beside us as we explore your world with eager hands and eyes. As parents love their child as they watch their child grow and develop, so you love us – and we thank you. Help us dear God to love one another in this way.

People: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader: You love us, O God, as we mature and begin to seek our way. You love us as we become aware of the world around us. You allow us to see the world as it is and to work for its healing. In our Diocesan cycle of prayer this week, we pray for Shane, our Bishop; Anne, our Metropolitan; Linda, our Primate; as well as the Diocese of Jerusalem and Archbishop Hosam Naoum, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; Bishop Susan Johnson and Bishop Michael Pryse and the Parish of March; the Reverend Dr. Jon Martin; and the Reverend Cathy McCaig. You give us the capacity to care and the compassion to take that and put it into action: we begin by remembering those whose names we hold in the quiet centre of our being (a moment of silence) and we remember those who have asked us to pray for them this week - Sarah, Scott, Marjorie, Roy, Irene, Howard, Zachariah, Jeanette, and Cheryl. Help us, dear God to Love one another in this way.

People: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader: Lord, you love us when we smile or play, You even love us when we say no to you and begin to move away. As parents love their children as they become tall and proud, so you love us even when we sin and fall away from you. Help us, dear Lord, to love one another in this way.

People: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader: We thank you God for loving us when we are unloving, for caring for us when we are uncaring and for calling us when we go astray. Help us dear Lord to love one another in this way.

People: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader: Lord, hear our prayers of love this day for those around us, for those whom we have held before you in our time of sharing and for those whom we have forgotten. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus who is our Lord, our Lover and our Brother.

Amen (from re:Worship 2022)

Fr. Michael: Holy Source of New Life, you promise to set us free from paths of fear, doubt and denial.
People: **Yet we resist your invitation, seeing only what we must give up if we are to follow the path of Jesus. You call us to have faith in your sustaining presence and power, but your call takes us beyond anything we can see or touch. We fear placing our trust in things beyond our control. We doubt that we can bring water to the dry places in our lives or replace our suffering with joy. Heal us and lead us home, O Holy One. Amen**

Fr. Michael: Whenever we seek to leave behind our old ways and turn to God for help, God forgives our faithlessness and strengthens us for the journey which lies ahead. We are the heirs of God's promises and are the children of God's compassion and mercy which is made present in the power of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Fr. Michael: As we resolve to follow the path that Jesus walked, let us offer one another the sustaining power of Christ's peace. The Shalom of Christ be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

(Confession and Absolution and Peace from Worship Elements 2022)

WE SHARE THE PEACE OF CHRIST WITH ONE ANOTHER.

Fr. Michael: Faithful Giver of life, you have done great things for us. In the life and teaching of your Son Jesus you welcome us into your heart. Help us to open our hearts to others and share our resources with material and emotional wherever and whenever they are needed. Bless this offering in your holy and blessed name.

Amen

Fr. Michael: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Fr. Michael: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Fr. Michael: Holy God, Lover of creation, we give you thanks and praise for in the ocean of your steadfast love you bear us and place the song of your Spirit in our hearts. When we turn from your love and defile your earth, you do not abandon us. Your Spirit speaks through Huldah and Micah, through prophets, sages and saints in every age, to confront our sin and reveal the vision of your new creation. Joining in the song of the universe, we proclaim your glory, saying,

People: **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.

Fr. Michael: Gracious God, in the fullness of time you send your Son Jesus the Christ to share our fragile humanity. Through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, you open the path from brokenness to health, from fear to trust, from pride and conceit to reverence for you. Rejected by a world which could not bear the Gospel of life, Jesus knew his death was near. His head anointed for burial by an unknown woman, Jesus gathered together those who loved him. He took bread, gave thanks to you, broke it and gave it to his friends saying, "Take and eat: this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." After supper, Jesus took the cup of wine, gave you thanks and said, "Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." And now we gather at this table in response to his commandment, to share the bread and cup of Christ's undying love and to proclaim our faith:

People: **Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again!**

Fr. Michael: Breathe your Holy Spirit, the Sophia Wisdom of the universe upon these gifts that we bring to you: this bread, this cup, our selves, our souls and bodies, that we may be signs of your love for all the world and ministers of your transforming purpose. Through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours, Creator of all, and we bless your holy Name forever.

Amen (Supplemental Eucharistic Prayer 1, Anglican Church of Canada 2001)

Fr. Michael: And now, as Christ has gifted to his Church, we pray,

People: **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.

Fr. Michael: We break this bread.

People: **Communion in Christ's Body once broken.**

Fr. Michael: Let your Church be the wheat which bears its fruit in dying.

People: **If we have died with him, we shall live with him. If we hold firm, we shall reign with him.**

Fr. Michael: The gifts of God for the children of the Light.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

We Share The Gifts Of God As A Family Gathered.

Fr. Michael: Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness and water the desert. Help us to recognize your hand beyond our imagining. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing that you are doing so that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love for us and its presence in Jesus Christ. **Amen** (Anglican Church of Canada Revised Common Lectionary Prayers 2002)

People: **Come, O Spirit of God, and make within us your home and dwelling-place. May our darkness be dispelled by your Light and our troubles calmed by your peace; may all evils be redeemed by your love, all pain transformed through the suffering of the Christ and all dying glorified by his risen life. Amen.**

Fr. Michael: Lord God our Father, Creator: we thank you for the gift of this parish of Holy Trinity Metcalfe, for those who come here seeking you and for those who minister from this sacred space. Inspire us with your vision to set our roots deeply and firmly in the faith, that we may be stewards of justice in all of your creation. Lord God Jesus, Saviour and Redeemer: we thank you for your continuing presence in our parish family. Inspire us to seek you in the Scriptures, the Sacraments and one another, that we may be faithful to your call to evangelism and love.

Lord God Holy Spirit, Sustainer and Renewer: we thank you for all the wondrous gifts you have poured upon us. Inspire us to serve you in body and in spirit; help us to share our gifts of time, talents, creativity and resources; open us to your renewing, life-giving power. O God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – we praise you, we love you, we seek you and we serve you in the name of Jesus, our Redeemer, Friend and Brother. **Amen** (RMF)

Fr. Michael: Now we leave this gathering, knowing that Jesus has made us his own. Take the fruits of our worship into the world bringing joy to those who weep, welcome to the outcast and comfort to those who mourn. God is doing a new thing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**