

1st Sunday of Lent

ALL-AGE SERVICE

Heavenly Scent....



Welcome

In this month's All Age Service we are exploring Mary's action in anointing Jesus' feet with perfume.....

If you're at home, you might like to seek out a few objects that smell really strongly – perfume, soap, coffee, vinegar, flowers, disinfectant, furniture polish, etc to have to hand as we explore the role of scents and smells in a house!

Geoffrey

Hymn – The Servant King

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHYFFQJNa_I

From heaven you came, helpless babe,
Entered our world, your glory veiled;
Not to be served but to serve,
And give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
He calls us now to follow him,
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears,
My heavy load he chose to bear;
His heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

This is our God, the Servant King,

Come, see his hands and his feet,
The scars that speak of sacrifice,
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered.

This is our God, the Servant King,

So let us learn how to serve,
And in our lives enthrone him;
Each other's needs to prefer,
For it is Christ we're serving.

This is our God, the Servant King,

Graham Kendrick
(b1950)

Opening

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

**Lord, direct our thoughts,
teach us to pray,
lift up our hearts to worship you
in Spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ. Amen**

Confession

**Lord God, our maker and our redeemer,
this is your world and we are your people:
come among us and save us.**

**We have wilfully misused your
gifts of creation;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

**We have seen the ill-treatment of others
and have not gone to their aid;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

**We have ignored evil and dishonesty
and failed to strive for justice;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

**We have heard the good news of Christ,
but have failed to share it with others;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

**We have not loved you with all our heart,
nor our neighbours as ourselves;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

Absolution

God who is both power and love,
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Jubilate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qS-7qh9tz0>

Jubilate, ev'rybody.

Serve the Lord in all your ways,
And come before His presence singing,
Enter now His courts with praise.
For the Lord our God is gracious,
And His mercy's everlasting.

Jubilate, Jubilate,

Jubilate Deo! *(sing through twice)*

Fred Dunn
(1907-1979)

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Scripture Reading

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.'

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn – Blest are the pure in heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xw7u0oDHqcU>

Blest are the pure in heart,
for they shall see our God;
the secret of the Lord is theirs,
their soul is Christ's abode.

The Lord who left the heavens
our life and peace to bring,
to dwell in lowliness with men,
their pattern and their king.

Still to the lowly soul
he doth himself impart
and for his dwelling and his throne
chooseth the pure in heart.

Lord, we thy presence seek;
may ours this blessing be:
give us a pure and lowly heart,
a temple meet for thee.

John Keeble
(1792-1866)

Talk

Do you find that when you go into a building or a room, the first thing you notice is the smell of it? Our noses tell us a lot about a room.

What would you expect the smell to be like in these places? Try imagining it:

- A damp cellar
- A bakery
- A sawmill
- A flower shop
- A public toilet
- A smart hotel
- A National Trust house
- A sports changing room
- A coffee shop

Let's try some different smells ourselves now, and see what we'd most like to have in a room.... Here in church we have a mix of different aromas. I wonder what you chose at home?

So let's now try and imagine what Lazarus' house in Bethany smelt like?

This was long before running water. Any water needed for cooking or washing had to be carried from the Gihon Spring – perhaps a half mile walk. Bethany was a hill-top village so there were no streams, and the nearest river was the Jordan about 40 miles away.

So the people would never have baths or showers. They would have washed with a towel using a basin of water. Washing clothes would have been a problem – probably not done very often. Given that it was very hot all through the summer the smell of sweaty people and clothes would probably have been very obvious.

I'm not sure if they had toothbrushes – it's quite likely they didn't, so their teeth might have been quite dirty, possibly with bad breath.

There were no toilets in the house – they would have been somewhere outside – a hole in the ground with a wooden shed over it, probably shared with others down the street.

But there would have been animal dung outside in the streets – sheep and some cows, donkeys, chickens too I guess. Easily walked on and carried into the house.

What other smells might there have been?

Baking, I guess – fresh pitta bread.

The smell of smoke from a cooking fire.

There would have been the smell of food cooking in pots and of roasting meat. At meal times the house might have smelt pretty good.

However these smells might be mingling in with far less pleasant ones from the rubbish heap outside, where all the rotten food would have been thrown.

On balance, I think the strongest and most overwhelming smell would have been the smell of the people themselves. Perhaps most like the changing rooms in my earlier list. Pretty unpleasant!

So this is the background smell to today's story. What happened next?

Jesus would have been hot and tired, and had arrived in the evening for a meal at the house of three of his closest friends – Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

We hear quite a lot about these siblings – Mary and Martha, who settled into different roles in the household – Mary listening to Jesus whenever she got the chance, and Martha feeling hard done by as she did all the cooking and housework. Lazarus is famous for being brought back to life by Jesus.

Sensing perhaps that Jesus was coming to a crisis in his ministry, they had invited him for a special meal – a dinner party, which turned out to be the last one they would have together. Martha served the meal and Mary then did an extraordinary thing.

She had bought a store of a large quantity of really valuable and strong perfume called Nard - heavy, musky, with an earthy smell. A bit like incense or lavender. She planned to use it for Jesus' burial.

But she was suddenly inspired to spread a really generous amount on Jesus' feet – the smelliest part of him!

And the wonderful smell of nard drove out all the other smells from people and animals in the house, filling it with a warm, reassuring scent. A heavenly scent – rather like the smell of incense which you might have come across lingering in some churches.

She was madly extravagant, but Jesus was delighted that she had been so generous to him. She had showed in a beautiful way that he was very special to her, and worth the finest ointment in the world.

The very best she could offer.

Judas was bothered that it was a waste of their money, and Jesus overrode his objections with his gracious gratitude.

I am reminded of my mother's reaction when someone gave her a generous present "Oh, you are so wicked, you shouldn't have!" It was meant as a compliment, but it could easily have been taken as a rebuke, making the giver feel a bit guilty.

Mary's spontaneous gesture was spot on – giving Jesus an unforgettable moment. He would remember her deep caring for him, and I'm sure it would have helped him to face the last few days of his life.

Being generous, in particular giving a gift that we can barely afford, is a wonderful expression of love. The more often we make generous gifts, the closer we come to God. Just like Mary!

Amen.

Affirmation of faith

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

The Peace

Jesus says to his disciples,
'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.
Not as the world gives do I give to you.
Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid.'

The peace of the Lord be always with us.

Hymn - For the healing of the nations

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDyHS_9S_6Y

For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us forward into freedom,
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow brief life's span.

You, creator God, have written
your great name of human kind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.

Fred Kaan
(b1929)
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Prayers

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ,
let us pray to the Father.

You sent your Son to bring
good news to the poor,
sight to the blind,
freedom to captives
and salvation to your people:
anoint us with your Spirit;
rouse us to work in his name.

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us out to encounter those in need,
and work with them

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to tell the world
the good news of your healing love.

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to comfort
the sick, the lonely, the depressed.

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to those who mourn,
to bring sympathy and understanding where there is grief.

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

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

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
as our Saviour has taught us, so we pray:

**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.**

Collect

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn – To God be the glory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-15v9iworAU>

To God be the glory, great things he hath done:
so loved he the world that he gave us his son,
who yielded his life in atonement for sin,
and opened the life gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done.*

O, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God.
The vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice ...

Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son,
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice...

Francis Jane van Alostyne
(1820 - 1915)

Closing Responses

The Lord God almighty is our Father:
he loves us and tenderly cares for us.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour:
he has redeemed us and will defend us to the end

The Lord, the Holy Spirit is among us:
he will lead us in God's holy way.

To God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be praise and glory today and for ever. Amen.

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.

The Blessing

The peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
keep our hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**