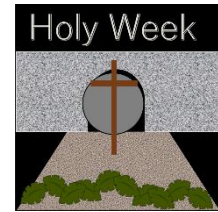


A creative walk through Holy Week 2020



Monday – Bible study with a difference.

Read John 12. 1-11 twice through and then consider all who are or may be present in this story and their different experiences.

Jesus – a quiet meal with friends and then one of the hosts gets down on her knees and anoints your feet with a very expensive and potent smelling perfume, not only that but she then wipes your feet with her hair. How would you feel if this happened to you?

Lazarus – you are hosting a very dear friend for dinner, the man who raised you from death, the man whose actions are arousing suspicion and unrest in the authorities. You love him but you worry what will happen next. Have you ever felt uncomfortable around a friend?

Martha – you have prepared a wonderful meal, welcoming guests to celebrate the renewed health of your brother. Everyone is enjoying the food, they are relaxed. Suddenly Mary appears and bends down in front of Jesus and begins to rub his feet with the perfume you were saving for a special occasion, your anger rises within, she is making a spectacle of herself, again! Was Martha jealous, envious, angry at the use of the perfume or angry at Mary taking centre stage?

Mary – you are a young woman who does not want to conform to the stereotype you are expected to adopt, you have already sat at Jesus' feet listening with the men as he shares new ideas, and you are still overwhelmed by what happened to Lazarus, you want to do something to show your gratitude but what. You remember the special perfume and you fetch it, from somewhere deep within you get the idea of anointing Jesus' feet and before you know it you are bending at his feet. You are so wrapped up in what you are doing you are unaware of the fuss going on around until you suddenly hear shouting. Have you ever sensed the need to do something?

Judas – you look on, astounded at what Mary is doing. You know the value of this perfume, you keep the purse for the disciples and you know how precarious things can get when Jesus gives away money, you imagine how many people could be fed for the price of this perfume which is being wasted on Jesus' feet no less. You shout out, you are only saying what everyone else is thinking, but Jesus answers your shouts with a simple 'leave her alone' and the strangest of statements 'she bought this to keep for the day of my burial'. How could Jesus know that? What does it mean that he knows that? We read this having been told in the other gospels that Judas is a bad sort and even John hints at this but is that fair?

Disciple – you have come along with Jesus and Judas and some others. You are enjoying the food and the friendship and for once it seems quite normal, then suddenly it changes. Mary is behaving strangely; Judas is shouting and again Jesus is saying he won't be around for long. All your fears rush back in and you don't know what to think, there is a crowd gathering outside and you don't know what will happen next. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt things were getting out of control?

Pharisee – there was a lot happening. The story about Lazarus had stirred up the crowds and too many people were intrigued by Jesus, the groundswell could threaten the status quo and with the festival coming up the Romans would be hot on any unrest. You don't know what is happening inside the house, but the crowds are still gathering, and you are worried. What threatens your status quo?

Guest – you are a neighbour, invited to dinner with the man who brought Lazarus back to life. You are not religious, but you know this man is a teacher and has quite a following, and you are intrigued. When the argument starts over the perfume you don't know what to think, it does seem a waste of good perfume and wiping someone's feet with your hair seems a bit extreme but maybe it is all part of the ritual. What would someone outside the church make of this story?

Spend a few moments reflecting on your response to these ideas and questions, then sit quietly and listen to God.