

**Ripon and Lower Dales Service for
SUNDAY 3 April 2022 (Lent 5)**

Intro and welcome

A warm welcome to all of you who join us in this circuit service for the 5th Sunday in Lent (Passion Sunday). My name is John Bailey and I'm a local preacher in the Ripon and Lower Dales circuit.

Call to Worship

Lift up your voice and sing boldly.
Open your ears and listen carefully.
Reach out your hands and give generously.
Open your eyes and look wondrously,
taking in the beauty of spring, of all creation,
and give thanks to our creator God for his
extravagance.
Amen.

**Hymn STF 59 Lord the light of
your love is shining**

You tube link:

<https://youtu.be/4mPYnPinpm4>

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining:
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;
set us free by the truth you now bring us --
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word,
Lord, and let there be light!

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness:
search me, try me, consume all my darkness --
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word,
Lord, and let there be light!
As we gaze on your kingly brightness
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here, may our lives tell your story --
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word,
Lord, and let there be light!

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

*Words and Music: (c) 1987, Graham Kendrick /
Make Way Music Ltd, PO Box 320, Tunbridge
Wells, Kent. TN2 9DE UK.*

Prayer of Adoration and The Lord's Prayer

There is a response, when I say: "Holy, holy,
holy is the Lord of hosts;" Your response is:
"the whole earth is full of his glory."

Let us pray.

Eternal and wonderful God
we come together in your presence now,
bringing to you our united praise and adoration.
You are a great God beyond all measure
and we bow in awe before the dazzling
brightness of your being and glory.
We join our heart and voice with the seraphs
in your presence who call to one another,

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.

We worship you, God of creation
and stand in awe before the myriad ways
in which the vast universe and the world of
nature around us
display the wonder of your wisdom and love,
generosity and beauty.
Open our eyes to the signs of your presence
everywhere.
Fill us with delight and gratitude as we
remember how in love
you gave to each of us our being
and the ways you have enriched our lives from
our earliest years.

holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.

King of salvation,
we praise you that you have not kept at a
distance from our human predicament,
but in Jesus you have come into our fallen,
broken world fully
to share our humanity and to bring us
redemption.
We marvel again at Jesus' willingness in love to
identify in this way with us,
to share our sorrows and to walk the long and
painful road

to a new exodus in the achievement of the cross,
gaining for us freedom from sin and pain and death.

holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.
Amen.

And together we say the prayer that Jesus taught 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.**

Reading Isaiah 43: 16-21 NLT

- ¹⁶ I am the LORD, who opened a way through the waters,
making a dry path through the sea.
¹⁷ I called forth the mighty army of Egypt with all its chariots and horses.
I drew them beneath the waves, and they drowned,
their lives snuffed out like a smoldering candlewick.
¹⁸ "But forget all that—
it is nothing compared to what I am going to do.
¹⁹ For I am about to do something new.
See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?
I will make a pathway through the wilderness.
I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.
²⁰ The wild animals in the fields will thank me,
the jackals and owls, too,
for giving them water in the desert.
Yes, I will make rivers in the dry wasteland
so my chosen people can be refreshed.
²¹ I have made Israel for myself,
and they will someday honour me before the whole world.

Short talk

God says "I am about to do a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not perceive it." This is hope with a capital H. – Audacious. Unbridled. Expensive. Fulsom. Yet it is not fabricated or fanciful, it is rooted in the conviction of what

God can, and will yet do, for God's people. This passage boasts of God's power and goodness. It speaks of God who cannot be stopped from redeeming his people. There is no challenge too hard, no obstacle too great, nobody of water too wide, no desert too dry, to keep God from creating or recreating the necessary conditions for God's people to flourish and for all creation to rise up in praise of God.

I would suggest this is a text for when we feel that the world is crashing down around us. When we are finding it hard to see God in our current "darkness", given the mess that we humans have made of our relationships and God's world. We get to see how helpless we are, incapable of fixing it ourselves. For the original hearers, this word came to them in exile, existing, rather than living, miles away from their homeland. It was probably just enough to do to get up and trudge through each day as it comes. But then there is the prophet's call for the people not to despair, but to hope. Because the Lord their God is ready once again to show his power and his grace to his people.

Is it cheeky of me to think of the Ukraine at this time. We seem to be in a similar situation. 10 million+ people displaced from their homes with 3 ½ million already seeking refuge outside of their own country. We certainly look on, relatively helpless to do anything, apart from providing support and assistance through whatever helping agencies we think serve Ukraine best. I really find it very difficult to place myself in those people situation – in Mariupol where the situation sounds horrendous and yet there is still hope. The city has been either flattened or at least had all its buildings rendered uninhabitable. I just cannot imagine what it feels like to be able to get away from that situation to a place of relative safety. I'm not sure my brain can cope with the feelings engendered.

This is where I believe faith in God and his amazing care and grace comes to the fore. Isaiah as he talks is remembering many things that God has done for Israel in the past and God's faithfulness to their ancestors. God has rescued them before and he believes that God will once again demonstrate his power and steadfast love in helping Israel out of their current pit of despair into a world where God shows his control through his love and he will create safe passage for Israel once again.

Isaiah foresees a new redemptive work not confined to moment in time but something that

will be continuous – streams of water will replenish the earth and God will create a world to be a place for human beings to live and flourish and even walk and talk with their God. The ultimate goal of this redemption is not just the restoration of Israel as a people but the hope for rekindling of Israel's relationship with God so that once again God's people can praise their one true God.

I trust that, just as Isaiah inspired hope for the Jews in exile so many thousands of years ago, it does the same for us to encourage us to look beyond our current realities and wonder what God will yet do in this world to overcome the current disasters that we humans have created especially around the area of Ukraine. I pray that we may continue our journeys creating a lifetime with God when like Israel, our hearts might find their true homing God, the one who made us, redeemed us, loves us and calls us to himself.

It seems appropriate this time to say a **prayer for Ukraine**

Loving God, your Son Jesus Christ, wept over Jerusalem.

Today, we weep over Ukraine.

We weep for those uprooted from their homes and lives.

We weep for those cowering in basements.

We weep for those who have witnessed death and destruction on their streets.

We weep for those separated from parents, from children, from spouses and siblings.

We are amazed at the resilience of people seeking to comfort those in need and so we pray for Governments opening up borders so that Ukrainians can have safe passage.

We pray for churches and individuals providing food, clothing and shelter.

We pray for medical workers ensuring that shattered bodies are put back together again.

We pray for ordinary Russians demonstrating and voicing their disapproval of the military actions in Ukraine.

May the Holy Spirit give us the willpower to turn our tears into action also.

May we, through our words, prayers and example pursue the things that make for a just peace in the world today and especially in Ukraine.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen.

And now we look towards Jesus and continue with Him on his journey. Our Gospel reading for today comes from John

Reading John 12: 1-8 NLT

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

12 Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. ²A dinner was prepared in Jesus' honour. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate^[a] with him. ³Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar^[b] of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.

⁴But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, ⁵"That perfume was worth a year's wages.^[c] It should have been sold and the money given to the poor." ⁶Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself.

⁷Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. ⁸You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

Hymn STF 489 All I once held dear

You tube link:

<https://youtu.be/4EI6EKZ8RMM>

- 1 All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.
Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.
- 2 Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.
Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.
- 3 Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in

your sufferings.
 To become like you
 in your death, my Lord,
 so with you to live
 and never die.
 Knowing you, Jesus,
 knowing you,
 there is no greater thing.
 You're my all, you're the best,
 you're my joy, my righteousness,
 and I love you, Lord.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

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Sermon

For just a few minutes I would like you to come back in time with me some 2000 years, to a corner of Israel, a village just a few miles from Jerusalem called Bethany. Things have begun to get busy on the roads to Jerusalem since there's only about 6 days to go before the Passover festival starts. It has been a warm day we're walking with Jesus and his disciples, who are again heading for Jerusalem. But for this evening, Jesus and some of his followers have been invited to stop at the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. You will be aware of these very good friends of Jesus, especially since the incident a few weeks ago when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This has been the subject of much conjecture and many people have heard about it and found themselves encouraged to follow Jesus.

At least for the moment as we arrive in Bethany, it seems quiet and peaceful. The olive trees are giving off a lovely smell and the orange groves are just beginning to show fruits beginning to form. Jesus leads us to Lazarus's home and enters. We are invited to follow: Try to imagine the situation: – we shake the dust off our feet and are invited to wash our hands with water. The low table is already set and Jesus is already reclining whilst Martha is still rushing around completing some of the final preparations. Take time to look around and imagine the situation – it is not overly formal you are being shown where to sit and can you smell that enticing cooking smell drifting over from the direction of the fire. Settle down in your given place and make yourself comfortable – there is already unleavened bread on the table to share. It is still warm although the outside temperature has cooled a little. The

disciples seemed very relaxed – it has all the makings of a very pleasant gathering.

Although it is his house, Lazarus seems to be remaining in the background, despite the miracle that happened a few weeks ago. Not unusually, Mary seems to be spending more time attending to and listening to Jesus. Martha is still organising and attending to her visitors' needs. All of a sudden, this wonderful perfumed smell permeates the room, people look to see where it is coming from. Quite a strange occurrence seems to be happening – Mary has let down her hair and appears to be pouring perfumed oil over Jesus's feet. It would appear that Mary has used a whole jar of nard to anoint Jesus and is using her hair to spread the nard smoothly all over his feet.

The apostles, especially Judas are objecting and trying to stop her. Jesus, however, waves them away saying "leave her alone she did this in preparation for my burial." What does this all mean? Judas is saying that it is a waste of something very expensive that could have been sold and the money distributed to many poor people. Some at the table are objecting to the fact that Mary has let her hair down in public – a display of wanton behaviour. What would you be feeling now, sitting at that table – would you be disturbed – worried – surprised by what has happened? Is Mary right to do what she has done?

Right now, let me bring you back to the present some 2000 years on. And let us look at the major players in this story.

Firstly, we have **Lazarus** who is forever in the background of this story. His rising from the dead through Jesus's intervention happened only a short period before this family meal. It is still at the forefront of friends and families' minds as they gather together. They are not yet fully aware of what is to happen to Jesus in the next week or two. It provides a background where death and resurrection has already been discussed and it remains an overarching background topic during the meal and everything that happens.

Then we have **Jesus** who is the one who brings the kingdom of God into the world, fulfilling many previous prophecies. He has spent nearly 3 years walking with, talking and teaching his disciples. And despite various insights such as Peter saying "you are the Christ." there is still very little recognition or understanding of what or who Jesus is. Nearly 3 years of teaching, guiding, cajoling, and living with the disciples and yet there is still a lack of understanding

about why Jesus has come and what he has to do.

Thirdly, there is **Mary** whom we find again drifting away from Martha. She is the one who commits her whole life and everything she has to the ways of Jesus, his compassion, justice and generosity – she is focusing on the worship that Jesus is deserving of. Can she possibly know more than all the others? Is this an embalming of Jesus before his death – not just worship but a preparation for what is to come. Having her hair let down to massage his feet and ensure the nard is spread evenly is just a logical thing to do, as she sees it. It is part of the worship that Jesus is owed as Lord and Master.

And finally, we have **Judas** who does his usual monetary thing – always having an eye open for what he can make whilst handling the groups finances. He knows what everything is worth – that jar of nard – a years wages. He calls it a waste – could have been sold and money distributed to the poor. Not I suppose an unreasonable thought, but he has a calculating mind. He is not thinking of the praise and worship statement that pouring the nard makes, he worries more about Mary acting improperly by letting their hair down in public.

I wonder how many of us have a sneaking respect for Judas's proposition that the poor would have done far, far better had the jar of nard been sold and the cash distributed. The fact that Judas is thinking this way was, I understand, very much more skewed in terms of what advantage it might bring him financial or otherwise.

I think my major question is did Mary know far more than one would imagine she might have known about what was in the near future for Christ. We know that Christ has warned his disciples of what will happen to him in the future but does anyone expect it to be so soon. Jesus countered Judas argument with the fact that the poor will be with us for a lot longer than Jesus would be with them. With hindsight we can understand that Mary was almost embalming Jesus with the nard in preparation what was to come in only a few days time. It is so much more than adoration, it is an acknowledgement that she was willing to give all she had to the one she believed was the Messiah.

Is there anything that we can do today or in the near future that can equate to the flow of love from Mary to Jesus as she prepared him for that

ultimate sacrifice. How can we show our love for a gracious God that sets an example of selflessness for others to be able to follow.

We know that Mary always seemed to want the closest possible links that she could have with Jesus. Whenever she could she spent time with Jesus, she did. So, given the choice, we should always spend time with Jesus. The more I think about this more I think she is the perfect example of how we should act in any given situation. We do not have the ability of being face to face with Jesus but we do have the ability to spend time with him in prayer and a loving bonding in all we do.

I realise that this passage of Scripture is relatively well-known and it is quite difficult to entice something new and unexpected out of our reading. However, at the risk of repeating myself, I believe that Mary sets an example in focusing our thinking, our love and adoration upon Jesus. If we give as much thought to Jesus as we give to everything else that we do and we share and discuss with him wherever it is possible, then I believe that at least we will minimise damage and hopefully, create in our actions, something good and positive for the future of God's world here on earth. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

mindful of Mary and Judas, and all that took place in Lazarus's home that night, we take a moment to reflect on times we have been critical of those who worship 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 anointed your feet with perfume, she glimpsed the precious nature of your calling,

so may we – whom know your feet will soon walk the dreadful road to Calvary – anoint them:

with penitence at our part in your suffering,
with thankfulness as we glimpse
the extravagance of your love –
Love that braved even the cross for us.

Amen.

Our prayers for others – There is the standard response. To: "Lord in Your mercy" your response is "**Hear our prayer**"

Let us pray:

Living God, joyfully we find in Jesus what it means to be fully human.

You give us hope that one day we shall be like Him.

May all His sisters and brothers know fullness of life and God's glory be seen.

Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

We remember all those fleeing from Ukraine,
We pray for people who are hungry or thirsty,
in need of food and drink,
for strangers hoping for a welcome,
for people without proper clothing,
for those who are ill at home or in hospital,
and for people in prison and all affected by crime.

Lord, these are our sisters and brothers too,
help us to do what we can to care and to ensure adequate support.

Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

We look to the day when all of creation will be set free from decay
to enter into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We pray for the climate crisis
that the world's governments may not falter, in the light of current events,
in their commitment to reduce global temperatures.

We pray for the work of NGOs, charities and faith groups
raising awareness, lobbying governments and garnering support.

Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

Lord God, who has made it known that You love justice and equity,
we pray for a better sharing of the world's resources,

for an end to poverty and inequality.

We remember the work of Christian Aid working with some of the world's poorest communities

and we pray for the work of Covax, the World Health Organisation's body
tasked with the equitable sharing of vaccines.

You invite us to collaborate with You and our sisters and brothers
towards the day when Your kingdom is complete

and poverty and injustice will be no more.

Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

Compassionate Christ,
we bring to You now people we would ask You to bless,
in moments of quiet we pray for them.

Silence

Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

Gracious God, as Easter approaches and we journey with Jesus towards the cross,
may we ever be aware of His glory.

Amen.

Hymn STF 470 Lord for the years

You tube link:

<https://youtu.be/T8fxVrU9bc8>

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the Word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

Lord, for our land, in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him,
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;
past put behind us, for the future take us,
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926)

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Blessing

We go to live as the people of God,
and the blessing of the God of Love, the Son and the Spirit
be with each of us
this day,
this season,
and always.

Amen