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LENT 5A

26th March 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening / Centering prayers

Take a moment to be peaceful.

If you are able you may like to plant your feet on the floor and concentrate on your body being still (if this is hard then do just sit quietly and comfortably).

Notice how you feel and what you are thinking about and let those things float away giving thanks for each, even if they are difficult feelings or thoughts.

When you are ready, raise your hands open before you and give thanks for the moment you are in.

Pause.

Place your open hands on your lap and consider all that's happened this week and what you might want to lay down before God asking for help or offering thanks.

Pause.

Lift one hand high in the air and think about what you will offer of yourself as you worship today.

Pause.

Lower your hands and pick up your service sheet.

If you feel able offer the following prayer:

Loving God, I am here in this moment to worship you.

Thank you for your presence with me.

Come, by your Spirit, Lord,

Amen.

Hymn:

367 STF – When I Was Lost, You Came And Rescued Me - [YouTube](#)

You may now wish to say the Lord's prayer, using a translation or version with which you are most familiar or comfortable.

Readings: John 11:1-45 – [Click for reading](#)

Response to on the reading

When we hear about Mary in the New Testament, some people mix up the lives of several very different women. Mary was a very common name among Palestinian Jews – so much so that around one in four women were called Mary. So it's only to be expected that a lot of the women Jesus met were actually called Mary.

There are three stories in the Bible where we can be sure that the Mary we are hearing about is this Mary, Mary of Bethany, here we encounter having lost her brother, Lazarus.

Grief – especially the kind of grief that comes when we lose a loved one – can literally bring us to our knees. Perhaps you have experienced that kind of grief. We can take heart from Mary of Bethany as she doesn't fall to bits... rather, she falls towards Jesus. And here's the comfort for us all: Jesus wept. Jesus shared in her pain. His comfort does not come from a place of detachment but from a place of understanding. So for those of us experiencing grief, let's remember that the feet of Jesus is a place of comfort and understanding.

Mary of Bethany's story challenges us in many ways. We often hear of Fathers of faith but here we see a Mother of our faith – and what a great legacy she leaves. When we look at Scripture with fresh, unbiased eyes and open ourselves to learning from her example, we see something beautiful and challenging. Here is a woman who had a deep connectedness with Jesus and lived a life of study, devotion, and reliance on Jesus.

How do you respond to this quote, from a blog by Sarah Nelson?

'Mary of Bethany is the Rosa Parks of her day as she refuses to be seated in the back, instead taking a seat up front at Jesus' feet. Jesus promised that the place of discipleship would not be taken away from Mary.'

Further questions for conversation / discussion / reflection:

- How can you demonstrate a love and devotion for Jesus that is extravagant and bold?
- Where do you hold back and guard yourself? Why is that?
- How am I affected by grief, and do I make space to process that grief?
- What do I learn from Mary that I can emulate in my own life?

Hymn:

345 STF – And Can It Be - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

God of the wilderness places, journey with me today as I pray.

As I go from this place, this time of worship, inspire and uplift my heart that I may work to seek your kingdom come, your will be done, in this place and throughout your world.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 27th March

- What does the good news of the Gospel feel like to you?
- Can you express it as a prayer of thanks in just a sentence or two?
- Once you have chosen or written your sentences, why not find someone to share that prayer with – as a text, or over the phone, or via email, or by chatting to someone today.

Tuesday 28th March

- Do you have a favourite poem or song?
- It doesn't have to be explicitly Christian. Consider the ways the good news of God is communicated through the words.
- If it helps, use these words as a prayer today, perhaps humming or repeating them over and over again during the day.

Wednesday 29th March

- God of love,
Today I pray for refugees and exiles all around the world,
Those who are living in fear and have fled the place they call home.
Show me how to show love to those in need,
To be a place of sanctuary to all who encounter me,
In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Thursday 30th March

- Think about how God is at work in the lives of everyone.
- You can see God shining out from all people.
- Remember this with the next person you speak to, and give thanks for the glimpses of God you see in them.

Friday 31st March

- Go outdoors and find something natural: a stone, leaf, flower, or something else.
- Consider the ways God has made this thing and then reflect on how you too are wonderfully made by God. What does this mean to you?

Saturday 1st April

- Today is April Fools Day, but since 2004 it has also been marked as 'Fossil Fools Day', a day of remembering and recognizing that the use of fossil fuels to generate energy is damaging our planet and the ecosystems on it.
- So, let us join in prayer for the climate, our planet, and the environment that we – as human beings – are a part of. Let us pray for action from our leaders, reflection amongst ourselves, and clarity about what we need to do to help manage and limit the damage caused by the climate crisis. In the name of the Creator.