

# Thattham URC – Worshipping Together (Gathered and Separate) A Short Reflective Service with Communion Sunday – 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022, 10.30am.

## Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to our Reflective Service today, here at church, online or read at home. It's good to be together again. We also celebrate Communion together. We are following the Lectionary for today and looking ahead to Easter. Today is the Fifth Sunday of Lent, also known as Passion Sunday, and next Sunday Holy Week will start with Palm Sunday. We are blessed to be a church family and we endeavour to offer a warm welcome and be a place of safety and peace. So, let us worship God.

**Today**, in our **Call to Worship**, the psalmist celebrates the great things God has done in the rescue of his people from exile. And we see the great things God has done in rescuing us from sins' exile so that we can find our eternal home. **In our Reflection**, Jesus spends time in the home of his close friends Lazarus, Martha and Mary. In an outpouring of thanks, as well as humility, for raising her brother Lazarus from the dead, Mary pours perfumed oil over Jesus' feet and washes them with her hair. This extravagant gesture shocked and amazed everyone. Judas was indignant at the waste. What happened here?

## Call to Worship: From Psalm 126 Great things He has done!

<sup>1</sup> *When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. <sup>2</sup> Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.'* <sup>3</sup> *The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. <sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes Lord, like streams in the desert.*

The Lord had restored the fortunes of Zion, a reference to Israel's return home from the years of exile, in Babylon. It was like a wonderful dream; something they had longed for had finally come to pass. There was joy, singing, celebration with thankfulness. The Lord has done great things again, restoring our fortunes, in giving his only Son, Jesus, to save us from the exile of sin, restoring hope for our eternal home. At Easter we also look back with celebration and thankfulness, for the great things the Lord has done for us. **Amen**

## Prayer of Thanks and Praise, and The Lord's Prayer

**Lord Jesus**, we thank you for this coming Easter time, when we can reflect on the vital significance of the Cross and on the power of your Resurrection. We praise you for your salvation plan to bring us Hope – hope for our life on earth and hope for our eternal home. We praise you for all your faithful promises and that, in trusting you, we have an unshakeable hope. Thank you that this transforms our lives and ever strengthens our faith. **Amen**

**Almighty God**, forgive us for the times when life worsens or overwhelms us and we doubt you and your ability to help us, and lose hope. Despite your promises to us, we are sorry for those times when we go our own way and trust more in ourselves and place our hope elsewhere. Help us to see the way you have prepared for us, and increase our faith to place our hope and trust in you. **Amen**

**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**

## Hymn R&S 289: To God be the glory

1. 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 an 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.*

2. O perfect redemption,  
the purchase of blood,  
To every believer  
the promise of God;  
And every offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

3. 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.

*Fanny Crosby (1820-1915)*

## **Dedication of our Offerings**

**Almighty God**, as part of our worship today, we give thanks to you for all your gifts to us and your provision for us. And in our thanksgiving, we have offered our gifts to you. Please accept our offering of money, given by various means and at different times. We pray they may be used wisely and well for the sake of your kingdom here, through the work of your church, to be a blessing to others. **Amen**

## **Bible Reading: John 12:1-8 Jesus anointed at Bethany**

<sup>1</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

<sup>4</sup> But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, <sup>5</sup> 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages' (three hundred denarii).

<sup>6</sup> He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

<sup>7</sup> 'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> You will always have the poor among you (Deut 15:11), but you will not always have me.'

**Thanks be to God for his word.**

## **Reflection: Extravagantly Thankful**

The brother and sisters: Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, radiated hospitality. John records that Jesus loved them. They offered their home and their hearts to Jesus and included his friends. Theirs was a home where Jesus felt comfortable, where he could relax. When facing danger or demanding situations, we need somewhere safe among friends, and it is telling that Jesus chose to stay with him during the gruelling last week of his life.

In this brief episode in John's Gospel, Jesus was a guest of honour at a thank you dinner, after he had turned their family life around by raising Lazarus from the dead. In the relaxed atmosphere, Mary suddenly jolted everyone to attention. Her action was like breaking a very large bottle of Chanel No 5 in a small space: the fragrance would have been overpowering. It was immensely valuable, about a year's wages for the average person. If, as is possible, it was part of her dowry, she was offering Jesus her love and her life's commitment in sheer grateful extravagance. Shockingly, she anointed his feet. Anointing his head would have symbolically anointed him as prophet, priest or king, but, by anointing his feet, she likened him to a corpse, since the anointing of a dead body began with the feet.

Mary's action carried a disturbing mixed message, which Jesus perfectly understood, of lavish gratitude and impending death. This was an incredibly tender and intimate moment in a family home. A respectable woman let down her hair only in front of her husband or when mourning. He has seen her hair when mourning at Lazarus's tomb; now he saw it again, foreshadowing his own death, in the midst of a celebration of Lazarus's restored life.

Sometimes, we have to hold in tension the paradox that life and death are not mutually exclusive. Funeral liturgies remind us that "In the midst of life we are in death". This is true every Sunday when congregations meet as people experiencing life and death. One person's celebration of an engagement or of a birth of a child is part of the same offering as another person's illness or bereavement. The church invites us to bring all the fabric of our lives to God, without denying any part of them, to make one offering. Thus, over the centuries, our churches have contained more joy and more sorrow, more fear and more hope, than most other buildings. It is a prayed-in place, a safe place that keeps itself as a place of hospitality for all, without charge, aiming to welcome people as if Christ himself.

This integrity of joy and sorrow, hope and doubt, is also built into the fabric of the liturgical year particularly at Easter. That is the wonder of Christian worship: it holds together the grief and the glory, the tears and the triumph, in one offering to God, and makes of it something beyond our imagining.

Just as Mary shifted the focus, so, our gaze is refocused as the liturgy turns us from the observance of Lent to become conscious of the growing overshadowing of Calvary. The cross comes more sharply into view. We turn to face it for ourselves, but we also turn as a community that will tread the pilgrimage of the next two weeks together, bringing our joy and sorrow, our hopes and fears, to make one big offering to God. Praise to you, Lord Jesus: dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life. **Amen**

### Hymn: My heart is filled with thankfulness

1. My heart is filled with thankfulness  
To Him who bore my pain;  
Who plumbed the depths of my disgrace  
And gave me life again;  
Who crushed my curse of sinfulness,  
And clothed me in His light,  
And wrote His law of righteousness  
With power upon my heart.

2. My heart is filled with thankfulness  
To Him who walks beside;  
Who floods my weaknesses with strength  
And causes fears to fly;  
Whose every promise is enough  
For every step I take,  
Sustaining me with arms of love  
And crowning me with grace.

3. My heart is filled with thankfulness  
To him who reigns above;  
Whose wisdom is my perfect peace,  
Whose every thought is love.  
For every day I have on earth  
Is given by the King.  
So I will give my life, my all,  
To love and follow him.

*Words and music by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend  
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### ***We come now to celebrate the Sacrament of Communion***

#### **A Simple Communion**

We are still scattered but we are brought together as we remember. Let these symbols of bread and wine help to make Jesus real to us in his body and blood. A body that was broken for us and blood that was shed for us. In this sacrament, we are made one with him — delivered from the power of death into his Kingdom of life and love.

**Almighty God**, we remember that Jesus was born of Mary; he lived our common life on earth; he revealed your love as a Father; he showed us the way to live; he suffered and died for us; on the third day you raised him from the dead; and he is present with us now through the Holy Spirit. In his presence, and in the company of all your people, we celebrate the Lord's Supper. **Amen**

**On the night before the crucifixion**, when evening came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer. And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, *'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'* In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you, for the forgiveness of sins.'* When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane.

#### **Hymn: R&S 448 Here, Lord, we take the broken bread**

Here, Lord, we take the broken bread  
And drink the wine, believing  
That by your life our souls are fed,  
Your parting gifts receiving.

As you have given, so we would give  
Ourselves for others' healing:  
As you have lived, so we would live,  
The Father's love revealing.

*C V Pilcher (1879-1961)*

#### **Prayer of Thanksgiving and Sharing – The Bread**

We give thanks to you, O God, that from the earth you cause the grain to come for the making of bread. We praise you for Jesus, the bread of life, whose body was given for us. By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and **this bread**, that the bread which we break may be to us the communion of the body of Christ, and that we may be made one in him. As of old you fed your people in the wilderness, so feed us now that we may live to your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

When Jesus had given thanks, he broke the bread and said:

**'Take, and eat: this is my body given for you. Do this, in remembrance of me.'**

**The Body of Christ broken for us.** (let us take the bread and eat)

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Sharing – The Wine**

We give thanks to you, O God, that you cause the vine to yield fruit. We bless you for Jesus, the true vine, whose blood was poured out for us.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and **this wine**, that the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the blood of Christ, and that through abiding in him we may bear fruit that lasts. As we share the sufferings of Christ, so give us grace that we may know the power of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

When Jesus had given thanks, he gave the cup to his disciples and said:

**'Drink this, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, in remembrance of me.'**

**The Blood of Christ shed for us.** (let us take the wine and drink)

Thanks be to God for these gifts beyond words, the bread of life, the cup of salvation, this lasting memorial. **Amen**

**Gracious God**, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life, and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you; and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**



**Prayers of Intercession for Ukraine**

*"Our prayers can go where we cannot. While many things may seem impossible from a human standpoint, in the realm of prayer there are no impossibilities"* Brother Andrew

**Loving Lord**, we continue to cry out to you for Ukraine. We thank you for those who are trying to work for peace. We pray for all who have been displaced from their homes, asking that they may find new life and love in unfamiliar places. We pray for those left behind, still living with the daily terrors of attack and not knowing what will happen next. We remember all those who have died, some of whom are known only to you.

**Lord, we long to live lovingly. Help our love to pour out.**

**Father God**, we pray for girls in Afghanistan, once again refused an education. We pray that the Taliban will reverse its decision and listen to your voice, encouraging equality for everyone. We pray for all the places in conflict in our world, currently out of the headlines. Show us how we can help and support all those who need food, shelter and education to enable them to prosper.

**Lord, we long to live lovingly. Help our love to pour out.**

**Sovereign God**, we pray for our country, especially as the cost of living rises. Show us how to support each other, even when we might be struggling ourselves. Give us a spirit of generosity and help us to be content with what we need. We pray for all who work in our foodbanks, our homeless hostels and our support networks. We continue to lift to you all those who work in our health care system, as Covid still runs rife in our communities.

**Lord, we long to live lovingly. Help our love to pour out.**

**God of all**, we also pray for all the communities we are part of: where we live, our church, our schools, places of work and our homes. Give us joyful hearts and generous spirits, so that we give our best to others. We remember all who are ill or sad at this time and all who are anxious or housebound.

**Lord, we long to live lovingly. Help our love to pour out.**

**Finally, Lord**, we commit the week ahead to you. We ask that you travel with us in our work, our play, our joys and sorrows. Help us to find space to breathe your fragrance and offer ourselves and all we have to you, for you to make whole, strong and beautiful.

Lord, we long to live with you with thankfulness and love. We ask you to pour out your blessings on us, so that we can pour them out to others. **Amen**

## **R&S 117: O Lord my God, (*how great thou art*)**

1. O Lord my God, when I in awesome  
wonder  
consider all the works thy hand hath made,  
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,  
thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul,  
my Saviour God; to thee,  
How great thou art, how great thou art!  
Then sings my soul,  
my Saviour God; to thee,  
How great thou art, how great thou art!*

2. But when I think that God, his Son not  
sparing,  
sent him to die - I scarce can take it in  
that on the cross, our burden gladly bearing,  
he bled and died to take away our sin;

3. When Christ shall come with shout of  
acclamation  
and take me home - what joy shall fill my  
heart!

Then shall I bow in humble adoration,  
and there proclaim:  
My God, how great thou art!

*Stuart K Hine (1899-1989)*

**Thank you** for joining us today, here at church, online or reading at home. It has been good to worship together, being thankful for our knowledge of God, made possible through the Cross of Christ and his Resurrection.

### **A Prayer and Blessing**

**Loving God**, we are thankful for the gift of being alive to you and to your creation! May our thankfulness to you pour out in our actions, in our choices, in our dealings with other people, in all that we do. **Amen**

### **And so, to you, our dear Church Family and Friends**

The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. **Amen**

