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LENT 5C

6th April 2025

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Today's opening prayers are based on Psalm 126, the set Psalm for today.

Loving God, you have brought me this far,
Restoring me when I have been broken, holding me when I have wept, healing me when I have been wounded.

Today I give you thanks and praise for your steadfast love.

Today I see the great things you have done,
The great love you have shared,
And I am filled with joy.

As I mark out this time for intentional worship today,
I know many people in our world, in my community and in my friendship and family circles are weeping, and in pain.

As I sing your praises today, I ask that you restore them,
That you restore me.

May your grace, your love, flow like a healing stream this day, O God,
And may all who are weeping find the courage to sing songs of joy.

Heal me, forgive me, accept me, and set me free, I pray,

In Jesus' name

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: John 12: 1-8 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

As you read today's Bible passage, from John 12, may you be drawn into this quiet but profound moment in the home of Lazarus, where Mary performs a gesture of extravagant devotion. She anoints Jesus' feet with costly perfume and wipes them with her hair. Judas Iscariot questions her act, deeming it wasteful, but Jesus defends her, highlighting the depth and beauty of her action. This scene is rich with symbolism and offers a poignant reflection on discipleship, the nature of worship, and the transformative power of God's grace.

Mary's act of anointing Jesus' feet with expensive nard, a year's wages worth, is a radical act of worship and devotion. In her action, we see the essence of true worship: it is heartfelt, sacrificial and appears impractical or even wasteful. Mary's disregard for the cost reflects a profound understanding of who Jesus is and the depth of her relationship with him. Reflect on your own acts of worship and devotion. Are there areas in your life where you could be more extravagant or sacrificial in your devotion to God? What might this look like in practical terms?

The beauty of this moment is further highlighted by the grace Jesus shows in accepting Mary's act of worship. While Judas criticises her, Jesus welcomes and defends her gesture, emphasising its appropriateness in preparation for his burial. This interaction reminds us that recognising and receiving God's grace can itself be an act of grace. As you reflect on this,

consider how you receive the acts of kindness and devotion shown to you by others. Do you accept them with the same grace that Jesus shows Mary?

Judas' rebuke, which appears to be concerned with the poor but may actually be rooted in his selfishness, contrasts sharply with Mary's genuine devotion. This teaches us about the discernment needed in our journey of faith. Criticism can often appear righteous, even well-intentioned, but the motives behind it can be misguided or harmful. Think about the times you have faced criticism...how can you discern when it is constructive and when it is destructive? How can you ensure that your own critiques of others come from a place of love and genuine concern?

Finally, Mary's act is a powerful illustration of the cost of discipleship. She gives something of great value, both materially and emotionally, in an act of love towards Jesus. This reflects the heart of discipleship, which calls for deep personal sacrifices: sometimes of our resources, often of our hearts and time. Reflect on what you are called to give in your following of Christ. What does it mean for you to "anoint" the feet of Jesus in your daily life? How does this shape your interactions with those around you?

Let this story inspire you to live out your discipleship with a renewed appreciation for the nuances of worship, the reception of grace, and the depth of sacrifice required. May you find new ways to express your devotion in both grand and simple gestures, and may you grow in discernment and love as you walk the path of faith. Through your reflections and actions, may the aroma of your own acts of kindness and devotion fill the spaces you inhabit, just as Mary's perfume filled the house in Bethany.

Responding in prayer

When I hear stories of conflict and oppression,
When I do not know who I should support
May I know Christ and be found in him.

When I face difficult choices,
When I am confused by conflicting interests,
May I know Christ and be found in him.

When I am bombarded by opinions,
When I don't know what to follow or whom to believe,
May I know Christ and be found in him.

When I am tempted to be an oppressor,
When I take sides at the expense of the poorest,
May I know Christ and be found in him.

In all things and in all ways,
Even if it means changing my mind,
admitting I am wrong
or seeing my own mistakes
May I know Christ and be found in him.

Amen.

Responding in song

94 STF – To God be the glory, great things he has done! – [YouTube](#)

46 STF – Everlasting God, the years go by but you're unchanging – [YouTube](#)

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain? – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

God whose love reaches me, no matter how far I have run away from it,
Help me to know that love today,
Coming close,
Guiding my actions,
Calling me into deeper relationship with you.
I love you God, help me to love with your divine love,
This and every day,
Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers

Monday 7th April

- Pour a glass of water. Think about the things you do that get in the way of your relationship with God. You might think it muddies the water of your life, but God forgives us for all these things, and offers us living water. Drink some of the water and give thanks for the way God reaches out to you with love and forgiveness.

Tuesday 8th April

- Write a note or a message to a friend with a Bible verse in it that you think might be relevant to your life. Tell them you're thinking of them, and pray about them as they receive it.

Wednesday 9th April

- Think about the fruits of the spirit. Pick one of them that you don't feel you are very good at, or that needs some intentional work. Spend some time praying about this, and then practice it for a whole day in all you do.

Thursday 10th April

- Find something in your house that is symbolic of your faith. Hold it. Give thanks for the journey of faith that God has taken you on in your lifetime. Ask for God to guide you on your onwards journey.

Friday 11th April

- Make a cup of tea or coffee, or something else to drink. As you drink it, imagine all the places and people that are responsible for making it, from source to your lips. Thank God for them, the source of all life.

Saturday 12th April

- God of all grace,
Today we pray for those afflicted by ill health and grief.
Hold the stillness for a while, and call the names of those known to you, then take a moment to pray for those you don't know.
Amen.