

Christ Church URC Rayleigh  
Service, Sunday 03 April 2022

**Welcome:** Welcome to those of you who are with us this morning, either in person or online and welcome too to those who will be listening to the service during this week either on CD or through our Facebook page.

**Call to worship:** We come to worship God on this 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent and our call to worship is based on verses from Psalm 94.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord God almighty, for my soul longs and even faints for you, for here my heart is satisfied; within your presence I sing beneath the shadow of your wings.

So let us all come before God to sing his praise

Amen

**Hymn** Word Folder No. 65

1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.	2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled,
Longing for truth, we turn to you	Longing for hope, many despair,
Make us your own, your holy people,	Your word alone has power to save us.
Light for the world to see.	Make us your living voice.

*Chorus: Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.*

*Shine through the darkness.*

*Christ be our light!*

*Shine in your church gathered today*

3. Longing for food many are hungry.	4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for water, many still thirst.	Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your bread, broken for others	Make us your building, sheltering others,
shared until all are fed.	Walls made of living stone.

5. Many the gifts, many the people,  
Many the hearts that yearn to belong,  
Let us be servants to one another,  
Making your kingdom come.

## Children Time : Sandy Brown

**Hymn:** R&S 210

1. We have a king who rides on a donkey,  
we have a king who rides on a donkey,  
we have a king who rides on a donkey,  
and his name is Jesus.
2. Trees are waving a royal welcome,  
trees are waving a royal welcome,  
trees are waving a royal welcome,  
For the king called Jesus.

*Chorus*

*Jesus the king is risen,  
Jesus the king is risen,  
Jesus the king is risen,  
early in the morning.*

3. We have a king who cares for his people,  
we have a king who cares for his people,  
we have a king who cares for his people,  
and his name is Jesus.
4. A loaf and cup upon the table,  
A loaf and cup upon the table,  
A loaf and cup upon the table,  
bread and wine is Jesus
5. We have a king with a bowl and towel,  
we have a king with a bowl and towel,  
we have a king with a bowl and towel,  
Servant king is Jesus.
6. What shall we do with our life this  
morning?  
what shall we do with our life this  
morning?  
what shall we do with our life this  
Give it up in service!

## Prayer

Loving God, we come to you to acknowledge that we have not always been good – or well behaved. We admit that sometimes we forget that you are our loving shepherd and will forgive us all the unkind things that we do or say. We give thanks for your son Jesus Christ, who died to wipe our slate clean and it is through him that we can talk to you and know that you will always listen.

Now we say together the prayer Jesus taught us (modern version) which is on the screen or on the inside back pages of Rejoice & Sing:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; forgive us our sins as we

forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, power and the glory are yours now and forever. **Amen**

## **Collection including Lent collection for Water Aid**

### **Blessing for the children**

### **Readings : Geoff Kittle**

Psalm 32

John Ch 12 vv1-8

### **Sermon**

My talk this morning is based on our reading from John's gospel. Some scholars believe that certain parts of this gospel have become displaced and that might be the case here as the reading begins "Now six days before the Passover", which would indicate timewise it was getting really close to the last supper and Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem, knowing that he would be betrayed and that he would die in the cross.

That said this is one of my favorite gospel stories. Jerusalem would be crammed with people all wanting to be there for the Passover feast and as per usual demand for accommodation outstripped supply. So at Bethany, one of the places outside the city walls that was designated as a place for pilgrims to stay if Jerusalem was full.

He was with Lazarus, whom Jesus has earlier raised from the dead, Mary and Martha and they had prepared a meal for him. It was then that this wonderful story of Mary's heart overflowing with love takes place. She had a pound of spikenard, a precious and expensive aromatic ointment with which she anointed Jesus feet. Judas criticized her actions as sheer waste. Jesus then gives a glimpse into what is about to happen, by saying to Judas that money could be given to the poor at any time, but a kindness done to him had to be carried out now as the time remaining for such a gift would soon disappear forever.

Within this story there are a three character sketches of Martha, Mary and Judas. However, this morning I want to concentrate on Martha and Mary.

Firstly there is Martha. She was serving at table and also loved Jesus. However, she was a practical woman and showed her love by the work of her hands. Martha always gave what she could. Many great men and women have been what they were because someone lovingly cared for them at home out of the public eye. Here we are being told it is just as possible to serve Jesus in the kitchen – and here I think of the team who serve teas and coffees after the service as well as the team that prepares the special meals we have in the Caley Hall – as on the public platform or in a career lived in the public gaze.

Secondly there is the character of Mary. She was the one who above all loved Jesus and here in her actions we see three things about love:

We see love's extravagance, for Mary took the most precious thing she possessed and spent it all on Jesus. Love is not love if it calculates down to the penny what it cost. It gives its all with only one regret that it cannot give more.

We see love's humility. It is a sign of honour to anoint a person's head. In Psalm 23 verse 5 the psalmist says "You may anoint my head with oil", Mary, however would not even consider doing this, She thought she was not good enough to do this and instead anointed his feet.

We see love's unselfconsciousness. Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. In Palestine once a woman was married, her hair was bound up and remained so and she would never be seen in public with long tresses flowing loose. It was the sign of an immoral woman, yet Mary never even thought of that. When people are in love they tend to live in a world of their own. They wander down the street holding hands not caring what other people think. Even now I can hear my mother's voice criticising young people for doing just that. Many of us, I think, would be extremely self-conscious about showing or even speaking about their Christianity, so concerned are they about rejection or being laughed at for being a Christian. But in this story here is Mary, who loved Jesus so much that she could not care less what other people thought. I remember many years ago waiting for my twin to arrive at Waverly Station late on a Friday evening. These two young people approached me and asked

if I believed in Jesus. I was so astonished by their confidence in asking the question that I replied in the affirmative and had a wonderful conversation with them. They certainly had no inhibitions in talking about their faith.

Yet to me there is one more theme running as an undercurrent as we read this story. Jesus was about to do something that other people might think of as rash. He was going to head into the lion's den to face betrayal, rejection and death on the cross.

But this Jesus did not care what other people thought, for he knew that his death was a sign of God's love – as we read in John 3 v 16 and 17 "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge but to be its saviour". Halleluia"

As we approach Easter with Jesus hanging from the cross on Good Friday and the empty tomb on Easter Sunday, let us remember the gift God gave us in the form of his son who overcame death on the cross, so that those who believed in him could have everlasting life and their sins forgiven. **Amen**

**Hymn: R&S 277**

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| 1. How sweet the name of Jesus sounds<br>in a believer's ear:<br>it soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,<br>and drives away our fear.          | 2. It makes the wounded spirit whole,<br>and calms the troubled breast;<br>'tis manna to the hungry soul,<br>and to the weary rest.     |
| 3. Dear Name! the rock on which I build,<br>my shield and hiding place,<br>my never – failing treasury filled<br>with boundless stores of grace. | 4. Jesus, my Shepherd and my Friend,<br>my Prophet, Priest and King,<br>my Lord, My Life, my Way, my End,<br>Accept the praise I bring. |

5. Weak is the effort of my heart,  
And cold my warmest thought,  
But when I see thee as thou art,  
I'll praise thee as I ought.

6. Till then I would thy love proclaim  
with every fleeting breath;  
and may the music of thy Name  
refresh my soul in death.

### **Prayers of intercession: John Palmer**

### **Hymn: R&S 293**

1. Ye servants of God,  
Your Master proclaim,  
and publish abroad  
his wonderful name,  
the name all- victorious  
of Jesus extol;  
his kingdom is glorious  
and rules over all.

2. God ruleth on high  
almighty to save;  
and still he is nigh,  
his presence we have;  
the great congregation  
his triumph shall sing,  
ascribing salvation  
to Jesus our King.

3. Salvation to God,  
who sits on the throne!  
Let all cry aloud,  
And honour the Son;  
the praises of Jesus  
the angels proclaim,  
fall down on their faces,  
and worship the Lamb.

4. Then let us adore,  
and give him his right  
all glory and power,  
all wisdom and might,  
all honour and blessing,  
with angels above,  
and thanks never ceasing,  
And infinite love.

### **Blessing**

Our service is over, sustained by the Holy Spirit go out from here to love and serve the Lord. The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon

you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. **Amen**

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