

Thursday 29 July 2021

Saints Mary, Martha, and Lazarus



The gospels describe how Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus gave Jesus hospitality in their home at Bethany outside Jerusalem. Jesus is said to have loved all three. After Lazarus' death, he wept and was moved by the sisters' grief to bring Lazarus back from the dead. Martha recognised Jesus as the Messiah, while Mary anointed his feet and, on another occasion, was commended by Jesus for her attentiveness to his teaching while Martha served. From this, Mary is traditionally taken to be an example of the contemplative life and Martha an example of the active spiritual life.

Sermon and prayers of intercession © the Revd Denise Owen.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,
<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 All things bright and beautiful (click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,

Now your glorious reign begin:

Now your glorious reign begin.

You O Son of God are Holy,

You we praise with one accord.

None in heav'n or earth is like you,

Only you are Christ the Lord.

With the Father and the Spirit,

Ever worshipped and adored:

Ever worshipped and adored.

The Collect for Saints Mary, Martha, and Lazarus

God our Father,

whose Son enjoyed the love of his friends,

Mary, Martha and Lazarus,

in learning, argument and hospitality:

may we so rejoice in your love

that the world may come to know

the depths of your wisdom, the wonder of your compassion,

and your power to bring life out of death;

through the merits of Jesus Christ, our friend and brother,

who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. *Isaiah 25:6-9*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, 'I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.' And again, 'I will put my trust in him.' And again, 'Here am I and the children whom God has given me.;

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. *Hebrews 2:10-15*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [Amazing grace](#)

([please click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it). Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.' *John 12:1-8*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Which biblical story springs to mind when you think about Mary, Martha and Lazarus? I wonder if it's the one from John 12 which we read today on their feast day? Or is it perhaps the story of Lazarus being brought back to life after his death? Alternatively, do you think of the story of Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to him teaching while Martha does all the work? It is of course Mary who is commended.

Those narratives all seem to be more familiar than this one. This story is placed after the raising of Lazarus, as this miracle or 'sign' as John calls them is mentioned at the beginning. We may also notice that it is again Martha who is serving dinner.

Mary, Martha and Lazarus are friends of Jesus. In fact, we might even say they are close friends of Jesus. From what I've mentioned above it is clear that Jesus spent a fair amount time with them. He valued their friendship and support, and they valued his friendship and the time he spent with them.

I should also say that this story has direct parallels in Luke's Gospel, but in that instance it's a 'sinful' woman who anoints Jesus, and Pharisees who complain.

So, why does John place this incident here and why is it Mary who does the anointing? Well, inevitably there's no one single answer to those questions, but here are a few thoughts.

Mary, and no doubt Martha too, have both experienced the incredible sight of their brother Lazarus rising from the dead and walking out of the tomb. Just imagine their astonishment and their joy. They went from the depths of grief and despair to the heights of relief and happiness. Doesn't that justify the extravagance of Mary's gift? A physical sign of her gratitude and thankfulness.

Mary and Martha had also experienced the great disappointment and probably confusion of Jesus not arriving in time to save Lazarus before he died. It seems that Jesus deliberately didn't respond straightaway. That must have been incredibly hurtful—incomprehensible even. We very rarely see Jesus appearing to behave in an uncaring or even callous way; this delay in attending Lazarus' sick bed is perhaps one of them. However, and of course, there is a deeper motive behind what happens in that story one of which is to demonstrate the power and glory of God as incarnated in Christ.

So, back to today's reading what can we as followers of Christ take from it? Well, I wonder how we display our gratitude to Jesus? How often do we even say 'Thank you, Lord' let alone 'do' 'Thank you, Lord' as I have suggested Mary does here? What extravagant and perhaps even wasteful signs of our love and thanksgiving

do we offer to our Lord and Saviour? We note with interest that although the perfume Mary uses is expensive, she is once again commended by Jesus, and also defended from the mean-spirited comments of Judas.

If we put ourselves into this story, who would we be? The one who offers an extravagant gift or the one who complains about wasting money that could be better spent elsewhere? I suppose I'm encouraging us all to consider what does Jesus deserve from us?

You could respond that we haven't seen such spectacular signs and miracles as Mary and Martha have, and we haven't experienced the resurrection power of Jesus like Lazarus, so how can we share in Mary's sense of overwhelming gratitude and love. Well, isn't it possible that all the elements of the Mary, Martha and Lazarus narrative, point to the greatest and most astonishing miracle or sign of all? The resurrection of Christ. In fact, Jesus himself alludes to the day of his burial in this Gospel. The resurrection is the most important event in human history, and it's the event that changed the whole world. It is the supreme demonstration of the reality of the power and glory of God, not just to raise Jesus to life, but to raise all humankind to life eternal. That is something worth celebrating, giving thanks for and being extravagant about. It is an objective truth that Jesus died and rose again, and that is the foundation of our Christian hope.

Mary, Martha and Lazarus had no idea of the cosmic and eternal significance of Jesus. They did have an inkling of his God-given authority and insight, but they didn't know what we know. Not at the time this Gospel is describing anyway. And yet, Mary still makes her extravagant gesture. We celebrate and praise what we know of Jesus just as Mary did.

It's also worth noting that while Mary was anointing Jesus, Martha and Lazarus were going about the everyday things of life. Serving and eating a meal with friends.

This is one of the wonders of the Christian life. In the midst of our everyday and very familiar routines, we know that Christ is with us. The Holy Spirit is empowering us and prompting us to acts of service and praise. What do you praise our Lord for today? Amen

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray;

Father, we thank you for the examples of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, companions of our Lord. May we like them spend time with him, listen to his teaching and remain faithful to his call. Empower us by the gift of your holy and life-giving Spirit. Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Father, we pray for our persecuted sisters and brothers across the world. We pray for Christians for whom walking the way of Christ leads to harassment, imprisonment or death.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for the church in this place. For David, our Bishop; for Mark, Bishop of Middleton; and Mark, Bishop of Bolton. We pray for their leadership in this Diocese. We pray for the vision for Mission Communities, and for parishes to work more closely together.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for your healing touch on those who are sick in body, mind or spirit.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Remember in your mercy those who have gone before us into your closer presence. May they rest in peace, and rise in glory.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 As the deer pants

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,
who has transformed those we remember today,
raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world;
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Be still

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
And now we give thanks, most gracious God,
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses
and glorified in the assembly of your saints.
The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
We, your holy Church, acclaim you.
In communion with angels and archangels,
and with all who served you on earth and worship you now in heaven,
we raise our voice to proclaim your glory,
for ever praising you and saying:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All 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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

God, the source of all holiness
and giver of all good things:
may we who have shared at this table
as strangers and pilgrims here on earth
be welcomed with all your saints
to the heavenly feast on the day of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen**

All **Almighty God,**
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.