

Meditation for the Wednesday of Holy Week – 8th April 2020.

John 12:1-11

What is the thing most precious to us?

If you ask most people that they will tell you it's friends or family, if you force them to choose an object it will rarely be the wide screen TV, or their car – most often it's a sentimental item, a teddy bear, a piece of jewellery, some photographs

What is precious to us does not always equate to what is most expensive...

By way of contrast though our bible story this evening tells us of someone who did give something precious, something intensely.... but at the same time something that was also incredibly valuable for we are told this perfume was worth a year's wages. To put that in context – the UK National average salary in 2019 was £35,423 per year

Can you imagine if someone you knew just poured away that kind of money?

It's hard to express how shocking that would be.

So it's no wonder the other people at the table were scandalised by Mary's behaviour, and complained about the waste of resources. ... and yet we see that Jesus defended her, he was not scandalised or shocked by her behaviour – if anything he was scandalised by the behaviour of the other people in the room, that they should see such a beautiful act of worship as being somehow wrong.

For he could see what they could not, the beauty in what she was doing, the love that it displayed and what a love it was:

- It was an **Extravagant love** – But that doesn't mean it was wasteful. Love doesn't count the cost. Apparently it costs £231,843 to raise a child in the UK to the age of 21. No one says that's a waste. Mary poured out all the perfume, large amounts there was no holding back, no stinting.. she gave her all.
- It was a **Humble love** – She is on her knees before Jesus, anointing his feet. The Psalms say it's an honour to anoint someone's head, Mary was doing the opposite by anointing Jesus feet. She never dreamed herself good enough to anoint his head.
- It was an **Unselfconscious love** – Mary's hair was loose, no self respecting woman at that time would be seen in public like that. But Mary didn't care, it didn't matter to her what anyone else felt – she was totally lost in the moment of serving the one she loved.

It was not a scandal, it was not a waste, it was love.

The scene also works on another level.

Nard is the perfume that was used to anoint the dead. This was the Perfume Mary was saving for her funeral. So in anointing Jesus with it Mary was preparing his body for burial. She is showing us what is to come. The whole house would have stunk of death....

We are days away from the Cross. On it Jesus gave us the most precious thing he had, his life, Was that a waste?

“Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” John 15:13

He gave his life willingly. It was going to cost him dear in pain and suffering but it was worth it to him.... It was certainly worth it to us
In the light of that what is our worship of Jesus worth? Surely this expensive perfume of Mary's was the least of what he deserves.

We too are called to worship. Like Mary we sit at the feet of Jesus. We too should delight in bringing all that is most precious to us to honour that love. and we should give that love extravagantly, humbly and unselfconsciously. Yes what Mary did was a shocking act..... But how could it be wrong – for all Mary was doing was, in her own way, reaching out to touch Jesus... to show her love for him.

It was easier for Mary of course – Jesus was physically there, she could physically touch him – even if it did bring disapproval down on her head from those around her – but what about us – how can we touch or indeed be touched by Jesus in this day and age? How can we surrender our all to him in love and obedience?

For many – it's the sacraments that enable us to reach out to Jesus – in the physical elements of the communion we feel the presence of Jesus, in the baptismal waters we know the spirit of God upon us.

For others it's the intimacy of prayer and that time of conversation with God or time spent reading the bible, discovering the many ways that God touches people through it.

For others again it's through the touch of his people and this is one I particularly treasure.

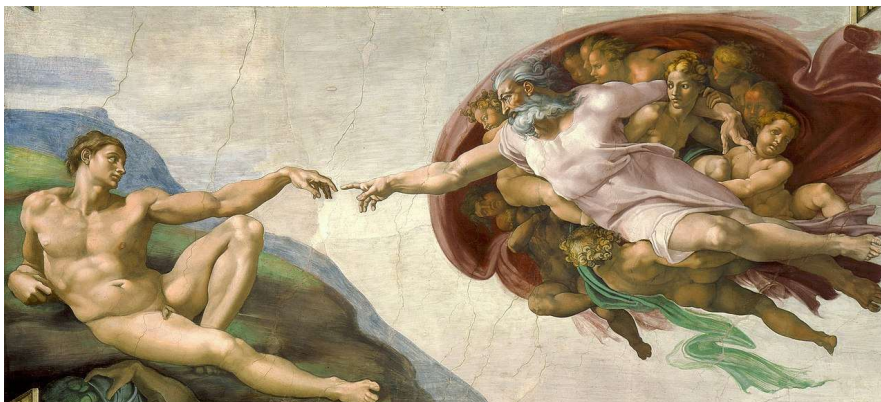
Jesus continues to live and work through the people of this world, he lives in the hearts of those that believe in him and it is in our love and service to and from them that we can still touch Jesus.

It's through the raising of children in a loving home, giving them the best start possible, It's through friendships and family relationships that encourage us to be the best of ourselves,

It's about going over to the person sitting by themselves in church and saying hi, it's through helping those that society has discounted as worthless, showing them that everyone has worth to God....

It's about our whole lives, all that we do and are and be...

its so many things and yet....in whatever way we reach out its important to remember that no matter how little we think that we are reaching to God, he is straining out to reach us in return, he yearns to have contact with us, to have a relationship with us, each one of us. I was reminded when preparing this meditation of a very familiar image I think for many of us.



This image is painted on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel in Rome and shows Adam and God reaching out to each other – what I love about this image is that Adam (on the left) is reaching out in what can only be described as a truly pathetic manner – His arm lazily held out and his hand hanging limp – it's hardly an effort – and yet in contrast we have God (on the right) leaning forward with all his might, leaning so far forward that the whole hosts of heaven are seemingly having to hang on to him to stop him falling out... He is straining with all he has to reach Adam and in the same way he is straining forward to reach each of us – listening intently for that smallest and quietest of words – yes....

....Yes Lord – I want to be touched by your presence

So I invite you all today to spend some time thinking what it means to pour out all that you have to Jesus, to love him extravagantly, humbly and unselfconsciously...
I invite you to reflect on what it is to live a life touching and being touched by Jesus
To meditate on the word that became flesh and made his home among us....