



Lent moves toward its conclusion, and this week, offers us a surprising invitation – to extravagant, celebratory adoration of the Incarnate One. In the midst of this sacrificial journey, this week is both refreshing, and deeply challenging, refusing to allow us the luxury of depression, cynicism or hopelessness.

May you know the joy of celebration in the midst of your Lenten fast this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Isaiah 43:16-21: The God who has saved Israel in the past invites God's people to believe that a new salvation is coming for them in their exile.

Psalms 126: A psalm celebrating the return of exiles to Jerusalem, and asking for God's grace as they seek to rebuild their lives and their homeland.

Philippians 3:4b-14: Paul, who has every reason to trust in his goodness under the law, explains why he chooses rather to trust in Christ for his righteousness, and how he commits to continually striving to reach the reward that is promised in Christ.

John 12:1-8: In Bethany, Mary anoints Jesus' feet with expensive perfume. Judas, however is unimpressed.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Isaiah%2043:%2016-21%0Acw%20Psalms%20126%0APhilippians%203:%204b-14%0AJohn%2012:%201-8

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

We beseech thee, Almighty God,
look upon the hearty desires of thy humble servants,
and stretch forth the right hand of thy Majesty,

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to be our defence against all our enemies;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
Grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross,
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Presider or deacon

As we press on toward the goal, let us earnestly offer prayers to God through Jesus Christ.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy catholic church throughout the world, sharing the death and resurrection of Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

For *N* our bishop, for presbyters and deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For all the peoples of the earth and for mercy, justice, and peace.

Lord, have mercy.

For the sick and the suffering, and for all who are in danger or need.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our families, friends, and companions, and for all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering Saint *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Blessed are you, God of eternal life, who made a way for us in the wilderness. Receive the prayers we offer this day and invite your people to the paschal feast; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Transformed by the life-giving power of the empty tomb, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Breath of God, with a mighty rush your church was set alight by holy fire. Kindle in our hearts the blaze of your love, that we may proclaim your saving grace to all the world. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

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Breath of God, every living thing depends on you for life and sustenance. Open your hand and fill us with good things that delight and satisfy. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Breath of God, we are a people divided by colour, nationality, and creed. Draw us together in our common humanity to work for peace and justice for all. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Breath of God, in our weakness we know not how to pray. intercede for us, bringing hope and healing to the anxious, the sorrowful, and those who are suffering or ill. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Breath of God, we need the visions of the young and the dreams of the old. Guide the ministries of this congregation that we may bear the good news of Christ to others. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Breath of God, in hope we wait for that which we cannot see. unite us with your blessed saints as we welcome the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Hear our prayers, gracious God, and grant all that we need to live as your Spirit-filled people, in the name of the risen Christ.

Amen.

POST COMMUNION

God of hope,
in this eucharist we have tasted
the promise of your heavenly banquet
and the richness of eternal life.
May we who bear witness to the death of your Son,
also proclaim the glory of his resurrection,
for he is Lord for ever and ever.

PRAYERS

Ever-loving God,
your Son was revealed that he might overcome evil
and make us heirs of eternal life;
grant that we who have this hope in us
may purify ourselves as he is pure,
that when he appears in power and great glory,
we may be made like him,
to the honour of your name;
for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and for ever.
Amen.

God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptised and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,

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that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.

Artist of souls,
you sculpted a people for yourself
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

God of the covenant,
in the glory of the cross
your Son embraced the power of death
and broke its hold over your people.
In this time of repentance,
draw all people to yourself,
that we who confess Jesus as Lord
may put aside the deeds of death
and accept the life of your kingdom. Amen.

God of the living,
through baptism we pass from the shadow of death
to the light of the resurrection.
Remain with us and give us hope
that, rejoicing in the gift of the Spirit
who gives life to our mortal flesh,
we may be clothed with the garment of immortality,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sisters and brothers,
as Jesus, in the days before his passion,
offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears,
let us pray for those who suffer, those who are in need,
and those who seek reconciliation.

Intercessions..

God of compassion,
you know our faults and yet you promised to forgive.
Keep us in your presence and give us your wisdom.
Open our hearts to gladness,
call dry bones to dance,
and restore to us the joy of your salvation. Amen.

Creator God,
you prepare a new way in the wilderness
and your grace waters the desert.
Help us to recognise your hand

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working miracles beyond our imagining.
Open our hearts to be transformed
by the new thing you are doing,
so that our lives may proclaim
the extravagance of your love for all,
and its presence in Jesus Christ. Amen.

O Lord our God, our giving is from the love you have bestowed on us. May our love be as generous and as kind as Mary's. May it be so full of beauty and of tenderness that your Name is glorified by those who see it. Bless we pray these gifts that we place on your table and bless us in your service. We ask it in the name of Christ Jesus, our crucified redeemer. Amen

Benedictions

Go now in peace.
God has done great things for us, and we rejoice.
Let us go forth from this place to do great things
in the name of Christ,
whose call leads us to restoration and new life. Amen.

Go in peace - love and care for one another in Christ's name;
- and may the presence of the Lord Jesus
guide you in the tempting times,
- may the joy of the Lord Jesus
encourage you in the difficult times,
- and may the power of the Lord Jesus
strengthen you in the dangerous times,
this both now and forevermore. Amen

LECTIONARY NOTES

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

In a rather startling turn, right before Jesus' enters his period of suffering, the Lenten readings move us to a place of joy and celebration. Isaiah promises the exiles a new salvation of God; the psalm celebrates this salvation as it is realised; Paul celebrates the righteousness he has found in Christ, which far surpasses the value of the "goodness" he enjoyed under the law; and Mary celebrates Jesus and her extravagant love for him through this almost embarrassing public display. This can be quite shocking in the midst of the discipline and confession that usually characterises the Lenten period. But, the message is clear – the journey through the desert is a journey toward life and joy, for it leads us to recognise, and own for ourselves, the truth that Christ brings us salvation – life in all its fullness. Mary, Paul and the people of Israel all received this gift with tremendous joy, and wild expressions of love. This passionate worship of the Saviour, is a challenge to us to allow our faith to be not just of the head, but of the heart, and not just of the way of justice, judgment or righteousness, but also of the way of joy, celebration and appreciation. And, although Jesus proclaims Mary's act as a preparation for his burial – with the shadow of the cross looming over this scene – the promise of God's life, and the demonstration

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that neither evil nor death can extinguish the love of Christ, give cause for celebration even as we prepare to remember the sacrifice.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

"All [people] will be called to give an account for everything good thing they beheld in life and did not enjoy." – The Jerusalem Talmud.

GLOBAL APPLICATION: Two characteristics of our current world that contribute to injustice and suffering: 1) Inappropriate or extravagant celebration that ignores the cries of the poor, while squandering resources on frivolous and selfish pleasure. This injustice is rife throughout the world. 2) Judgemental asceticism that frowns on all light-hearted, fun and pleasurable experiences. This, too, is rife. However, authentic Celebration is a necessary discipline in following Christ, and in the fight against injustice. Poor and suffering communities often use singing, dancing and celebration as a way to rise above their circumstances, as did the slaves, the Civil Rights activists, and the anti-apartheid strugglers. As followers of Christ, our witness and work in the world is strengthened when we find ways to celebrate in inclusive, appropriate and life-affirming ways. One of the great challenges of Lent, and of this week's Lectionary, is the call to ensure that our ability to celebrate is not hindered by difficult circumstances or by suffering and sacrifice. When, like Christ, we can embrace celebration and joy as "disciplines" even in the worst of times, we become truly life-giving reflections of God's Reign. What might it mean for our world if we took the call to celebration more seriously?

LOCAL APPLICATION: The message of Jesus is good news indeed, but unfortunately this truth is all too often obscured by those who seek to follow it. Through failure to celebrate – while frowning on the joy and play of others – and claiming a joy that we restrict only to those who look or believe like we do, we have left the impression that following Christ is about judgment, hatred, displeasure and legalism. As so many people seek to pour out the perfume of their lives at the feet of Christ, we stand by, like Judas, and judge, while hypocritically keeping life's abundance for ourselves. Is it possible that this Lent we are being called to true celebration, allowing ourselves to be surprised and moved to passionate joy by the truth of the reign of God, while inviting all who will to join us in true celebration wherever and however we may find it? On the other hand, it is tempting to view celebration and praise as something that is linked to our circumstances "going right". It is often our suffering that creates crises of faith, and that rob us of sustaining joy. But, when we have learned to celebrate as a true Kingdom "discipline" we find the strength to stand in solidarity with those who suffer, while uplifting and strengthening them, and we also find the courage and hope to love, share, include and forgive without feeling the need to stand apart and judge.

SERMON OUTLINE

Jn 12:1-8: 6 days before the Passover...

dangerous days for Jesus - now only 2 miles from the city - *Jesus arrived at Bethany* - home of Lazarus - modern Arab town **El Azariah**

1. The PARTY to which J was invited: given by sisters..

a) the Service of Martha - *Martha (v2) served* - showed her love in a practical way... **cf Lk10.38:** *was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made* - for the group...

b) the Sacrifice of Mary - she demonstrated her love for their honoured guest in a different & unusual way...

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2. The PERFUME to which attention is drawn: kept especially for a special day – possibly her wedding day

a) how she Honoured Jesus - *she took (v3) about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume & poured it on Jesus' feet* - imported from India? – hence its cost & special nature....

b) how she Humbled herself – seen in her actions...

i) Anointed *Jesus' feet* - not worthy to touch his head...

ii) *Wiped them with her hair* - no respectable woman would appear in public with her hair let down - convention mattered little in her love for Jesus!

Her heart was filled with love – for Jesus...

Her House was filled *with the fragrance of the perfume*

3. The POOR to whom Jesus referred... Jesus contrasts the **goodness** of Mary with the **greed** of Judas under the pretext of concern for the poor... *Leave her alone. It was meant that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.* Mary made the most of the opportunity. Do we? What sacrifices do we make for Jesus?

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

The Prophet Mary - by The Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor who is an Episcopal priest and well-known author. Sermon based on the incidents in the home at Bethany: Mary and Martha; the woman perfuming her master's feet.

'Whatever Mary thought about what she did, and whatever anyone else in the room thought about it, Jesus took it as a message from God--not the hysteric ministrations of an old maid gone sweetly mad but the carefully performed act of a prophet. Everything around Mary smacked of significance--Judas, the betrayer, challenging her act; the flask of nard--wasn't it left over from Lazarus' funeral?--and out in the yard, a freshly vacated tomb that still smelled of burial spices, waiting for a new occupant. The air was dense with death, and while there may at first have been some doubt about whose death it was, Mary's prophetic act revealed the truth.

'She was anointing Jesus for his burial, and while her behavior may have seemed strange to those standing around, it was no more strange than that of the prophets who went before her--Ezekiel eating the scroll of the Lord as a sign that he carried the word of God around inside of him (Ezekiel 2), or Jeremiah smashing the clay jar to show God's judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (Jeremiah 19), or Isaiah walking around naked and barefoot as an oracle against the nations (Isaiah 20). Prophets do things like that. They act out. They act out the truth that no one else can see, and those standing around either write them off as nuts or fall silent before the disturbing news they bring from God...'

http://day1.org/1760-the_prophet_mary

Lent is 'Come to Jesus' Time - by [Walter Brueggemann](#), a Sojourners contributing editor, is professor emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.

Excellent concise introduction on what Lent is about - "Lent is a time for "following." The narrative about Jesus' suffering and death provides a way in which we are able, in an act

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of disciplined imagination, to situate (or re-situate) our lives in the story of Jesus. We become aware that the story of Jesus requires and permits a new version of our own story of life and faith....

Scroll down for a development of the introduction applied to today's readings and Psalm...
"Lent is a time to participate in the suffering and death of Christ, in order that we may be ready for the Easter gift of new life. Participation in that suffering consists in a life of trusting obedience boldly lived in contradiction to the way the world is organised. Lenten discipline is a practice of our own life as the willing giving-up of self in obedience in order to receive a new self from God."

<http://sojo.net/magazine/2010/03/lent-come-jesus-time>

["Expensive Oil for His Feet,"](#) Pastor Edward F. Markquart, Grace Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_c_expensiveoilforhisfeet.htm.

["In the Thick of Deceit,"](#) John Jewell

<http://www.lectionarysermons.com/zun5l.html>

CHILDREN

John 12:1-8

An Extravagant Love"by Rev. Richard J. Fairchild

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/c-le05se.php>

Giving him your best

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/giving-your-best.html>

Give your best to Jesus

<http://www.sundaychildrensfocus.com/index.php/show-your-love-give-best-to-jesus.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[Love Divine, All Loves Excelling](#)

[Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee](#)

[Rejoice, The Lord Is King](#)

[I Surrender All](#)

[Sing Sing Sing](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Hosanna](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Extravagant Worship](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Undignified](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[I Praise You, Lord](#)