



## AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2025

*The Second Sunday before Lent*

*compiled by Michael Winter*

*Local Preacher & Anglican Lay Minister*

Blessed are you, Sovereign God, creator of all, to you be glory and praise for ever. You founded the earth in the beginning and the heavens are the work of your hands. In the fullness of time you made us in your image, and in these last days you have spoken to us in your Son Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. As we rejoice in the gift of your presence among us let the light of your love always shine in our hearts, your Spirit ever renew our lives and your praises ever be on our lips. Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. *(from Psalm 37)*

### Hymn: STF 545

1] Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart  
be all else but naught to me, save that Thou art;  
be thou my best thought in the day and the night  
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

2] Be Thou my wisdom, be thou my true word  
be thou ever with Thee and I with thee, Lord;  
Be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;  
be thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.

3] Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;  
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;  
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower;  
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

4] Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:  
be thou mine inheritance, now and always;  
be thou and thou only first in my heart:  
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5] High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,  
O grant me its joys after victory is won;  
Great heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

*Irish, 8<sup>th</sup> century,  
translated by Mary Elizabeth Bryne (1880-1931)*

### Prayers (from the Church of Scotland)

God of relationship,  
we cannot ignore the brokenness of our lives,  
of our world, of our Church.  
We declare ourselves "fine" with how things are  
and long for the encouragement of Your presence  
as we long to see the transformation  
of new creation taking place  
in the communities of our world.

We pray for human relationships,  
for spouses, partners,  
parents and children,  
working encounters and friendships.  
We give thanks where sharing life with others is supportive,  
and allows the other to thrive.

We remember those whose lives are fraught,  
frantic, and abusive.  
Where those of any gender feel their worth questioned  
by cruel words and threatening hands,  
may they be led to the support that keeps them safe.  
We pray for the relationships of our world.  
In testing times of war and conflict,  
communities are tested  
as those who have been displaced seek new homes and places to shelter.

We give thanks for those many communities across the world  
who have offered refuge to the outsider,  
offering hospitality that allows stories to blend  
and develop new ways to live in harmony with another.  
We long for the discordant voices of our world to pause  
and listen to the songs of others.  
In what they hear,  
may politicians and tyrants be offered wisdom  
that seeks the best for all people and not power for themselves.  
We pray for Christ's Church,  
in all its vibrant colour,  
and celebrate the many ways in which the story of Jesus is revealed.

Help us to value one another,  
and to cherish our diversity.  
In these days when churches unite and close,  
may the Spirit's comfort be a balm to the pain of life,  
and the Spirit's inventiveness inspire us  
in sharing and shaping stories within our new communities.  
God of relationship, still our hearts,  
as we patiently wait for the Holy Spirit to lead us in our sharing of Christ's story. Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Reading: Luke 7:27-38**

This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.) Jesus went on to say, "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other:

"We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance;  
we sang a dirge, and you did not cry."

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

### **Hymn STF 322**

1] How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
in a believer's ear!

It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,  
and drives away our fear.

2] It makes the wounded spirit whole  
and calms the troubled breast;  
'tis manna to the hungry soul,  
and to the weary, rest.

3] Dear name – the rock on which I build,  
My shield and hiding place,  
My never-failing treasury filled  
With boundless stores of grace.

4] Jesus, My Shepherd, Brother, Friend,  
my Prophet, Priest, and King,  
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
accept the praise I bring.

5] Weak is the effort of my heart,  
how 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.

*John Newton (1725-1807)*

### **Reflection** based on a reflection by Linda DeLay Wallace

There is much speculation as to the identity of the woman with the alabaster jar. Some say it was Mary Magdalene, but any other time in Scripture where Mary Magdalene was involved, her name was given. Others speculate that it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus. We read in Matthew 26 of a woman anointing Jesus with costly oil while he was in Bethany and it is likely that was Mary. But in this passage, the woman is not named, just her reputation that defines her.

Here is a woman who has learned that Jesus would be at Simon's house. Was she part of one of the crowds that listened to Jesus' teaching? Did she stand at the back of the crowd, with her face mostly hidden, so that she could hear this man of whom she had heard so many tales? Did she know someone who had been healed by him or had she just heard the rumours and stories that were floating around? Whatever it was, it was obvious that Jesus' words and actions had deeply touched her life.

The imagery of this woman standing behind the feet of Jesus while he is reclining at the table is powerful. She wets his feet with her tears and then wipes them with her hair. Not only does she wipe his feet with her hair, afterwards, she pours very expensive perfume on them. In many ways, the enormity of what she did is amazing.

For a woman who was a sinner, possibly a prostitute, to enter the home of a Pharisee and weep at the feet of Jesus had to be uncomfortable for all the guests at the table. She was probably discouraged from entering at the door, but entered anyway. She had to be conscious of the waves of disapproval sent her way, but that did not stop her from lavishing Jesus with her adoration. She humbled herself by her actions and in doing so she made sure that Jesus knew what an impact he had on her life. Would our love for

Jesus have been strong enough to enter a home where not welcome. Would we have been willing to anoint his feet with a jar of perfume that probably cost more than a year's wages?

And Jesus' response: later in the chapter we read: "Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven - as her great love has shown." What insight this gives into the Jesus who loves the sinner, no matter what their past may be.



### **The Collect**

Almighty God,

you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things,  
now and for ever. Amen

### **Hymn: STF 495**

1] Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
forgive our foolish ways:  
re clothe us in our rightful mind;  
in purer lives your service find,  
in deeper reverence, praise.

2] In simple trust like theirs who heard,  
beside the Syrian sea,  
the gracious calling of the Lord  
let us, like them, without a word:  
rise up and follow thee.

3] O sabbath rest by Galilee!  
O calm of hills above,  
where Jesus knelt to share with thee  
the silence of eternity  
interpreted by love!

4] With that deep hush subduing all  
our words and works that drown  
the tender whisper of thy call,  
as noiseless let thy blessing fall  
as fell your manna down.

5] Drop your still dews of quietness,  
till all our strivings cease;  
take from our souls the strain and stress,  
and let our ordered lives confess  
the beauty of thy peace.

6] Breathe through the heats of our desire  
thy coolness and thy balm;  
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,  
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,  
O still small voice of calm!

*John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)*

May Christ the Son of God, perfect in us the image of his glory and gladden our hearts with the good news of His kingdom; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among us, and remain with us always. Amen