

Holy Week 2020

Monday

Readings

Isaiah 42:1-9

Ps.36:5-11

Hebrews 9:11-15

John 12:1-11 *Mary anoints Jesus*

Revd. Helen's reflection:

This morning I opened my small bottle of Spikenard and inhaled deeply – only a few fragrant drops left now. I brought it back from Jerusalem in 2013, a simple reminder of a profound journey – walking the Via Dolorosa, praying at the Western (Wailing) Wall and also overnight in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. A reminder too, of all the sights, sounds and smells of the bustling Old City - and a kaleidoscope of emotions to match.

But this morning, in Covid-19 lockdown status, in a city more than 16,000kms away, in a world stopped in its tracks, I'm left wondering whether my feelings are in some way connected with Mary. Not only was costly perfume of pure nard poured out, but an outpouring of love and grief. Mary had to 'do' something, even as she felt the paralysis and dread of what was about to happen.



For me, Palm Sunday and the entry into Holy Week has - at one level - left me in a state of paralysis and dread. I felt a desperate need to 'do' something yesterday – not only a simple Eucharist shared on behalf of us all, but also some outer claiming that while the Church isn't an 'essential service' in the eyes of the state, our beloved Jesus the Christ and this most Holy Week is essential in our lives. And that is why I remained in my clergy attire as I took my afternoon walk.

Another experience this morning touched the depths of my being. The news story of a young mother who, due to Covid-19 restrictions, awaited the imminent premature birth and death of her baby son (at twenty-one weeks gestation) alone. Aroha Nicola, 23, was forced to live alone the agony of anticipatory grief for her newborn son who died 10 minutes after birth, because of the strict coronavirus lockdown rules. The child was named Te Whakanga, after his recently deceased 28 year old uncle.

'He grabbed my finger and took his last breath' his mother Aroha said.

The photo of the tiny child in Aroha's arms, both being held by partner and father Lee Cody, was full of deepest tenderness, overwhelming love and heart-breaking grief.

Each of us will be feeling losses and griefs as we live in isolation bubbles through this most extraordinary Holy Week.

What most precious things are we being called to let go of – both outwardly and inwardly?

How might each of us express our love and our grief this week?

Anointing

*Jesus prepares himself for death,
 He is continually pouring himself out,
 Emptying himself and receiving God,
 Dying and rising.
 The disciples are clinging to survival.
 Only this woman understands and does not cling,
 But in her own outpouring
 Empties herself in love and blessing
 For Jesus' sake.
 She too, is ready.*

**Monday Readings:****Isaiah 42:1-9**

The Servant, a Light to the Nations
 Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
 my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
 I have put my spirit upon him;
 he will bring forth justice to the nations.
 He will not cry or lift up his voice,
 or make it heard in the street;
 a bruised reed he will not break,
 and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
 he will faithfully bring forth justice.
 He will not grow faint or be crushed
 until he has established justice in the earth;
 and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Thus says God, the Lord,
 who created the heavens and stretched them out,
 who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
 who gives breath to the people upon it
 and spirit to those who walk in it:
 I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
 I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
 I have given you as a covenant to the people,
 a light to the nations,
 to open the eyes that are blind,
 to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
 from the prison those who sit in darkness.
 I am the Lord, that is my name;
 my glory I give to no other,
 nor my praise to idols.
 See, the former things have come to pass,
 and new things I now declare;
 before they spring forth,
 I tell you of them.

Ps.36:5-11

Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,
 your faithfulness to the clouds.
 Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
 your judgements are like the great deep;
 you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
 All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
 They feast on the abundance of your house,
 and you give them drink from the river of your delights.
 For with you is the fountain of life;
 in your light we see light.

O continue your steadfast love to those who know you,
 and your salvation to the upright of heart!
 Do not let the foot of the arrogant tread on me,
 or the hand of the wicked drive me away.

Hebrews 9:11-15

But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.

John 12:1-11*Mary Anoints Jesus*

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. But 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.'

The Plot to Kill Lazarus

When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.