

Welcome

Prelude

Acknowledgement of First Peoples

We acknowledge the traditional caretakers of this land our First Nations Peoples as the keepers of ancient knowledge whose cultures and customs continue to nurture this land today. We are thankful for the community that we share together now, and we pay our respects to their elders/leaders, both past and present, and those who are rising up to become leaders of tomorrow.

Gathering and Centring

For those of you unable to connect via our website on the internet. I invite you to choose three hymns or songs to play at the designated places in the service.

Set up your own worship space and make yourself comfortable. You might want to create a worship space with a candle or a cross, or a symbol that in some way reflects our Gospel reading for today. Maybe you could place something in your worship space that is valuable or special to you in some way, it could be an oil burner with scented oil or a bottle of perfume, or something that represents gratitude or servanthood. If you have a candle, I invite you to light your candle at the time set aside during worship to light the worship candle.

Before you begin, take a moment to quiet yourself and to be aware of God's presence. You may want to spend some time in silence, or you might want to take some deep breaths and let go of any anxiety or concerns that you may have, and hand them over to God. For wherever you are, wherever we are, wherever you go, wherever we go, God is near. So, when you are ready enter into this time of worship with confidence and hope, knowing that God is already with you, and with all of us, standing eager to meet us and bless us.

The Peace

I invite you to share a sign of peace with those who may be with you at this time. If you are participating in this time of worship by yourself, then I invite you to name those who are dear and near to you or who are on your mind and say, "Peace be with you".

Peace be with you.

Lighting the Worship candle

May the Christ Candle we light symbolise
our desire to bring light into a world of darkness
and hope into a world of despair,
especially for those who feel
unheard, rejected, and judged.

Song

Come and find the quiet centre

At this point during the service, I invite you to play one of the songs that you have chosen. Once again listen to the words carefully, let them wash over you, uplift you and minister to you.

Opening Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we are curious,
wondering what you are going to do.
While others may expect to be disappointed,
we're prepared to be surprised.

Open our eyes to recognise your presence here among us;
open our hearts to the love that you have for us;
And open our minds to the truth you would reveal to us

For we know, just as you brought life to Lazarus through Jesus Christ,
you will also touch us with your Spirit,
causing us to cast aside the wrappings of death,
and to walk in newness of life. **Amen.**

The readings

Introduction

Take some time to reflect upon these readings. What words or passages catch your attention? What do you imagine the surroundings looked like where these readings take place? How does that impact the way you hear them or how they speak to you? Perhaps you might want to write your thoughts or feelings down, or draw something that reflects your thoughts and feelings, maybe there is a hymn or song that you are reminded of, if so, sing it or listen to it. Then when you are ready, continue on in this time of worship.

Psalm 105: 1-6, 23-26, 45 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Once again, we return to Psalm 105. Where the Psalmist instructs the hearer to be thankful and to give praise to God for all that God has done. Our reading then jumps to verses 23- 26. In these verses the psalmist deals with the 400-year period the Israelites were in Egypt and sees God's overarching sovereignty in that time where God gave huge population growth to His people, which was a matter of grave concern to the Egyptians. Then once again our reading finishes with verse 45 highlighting that the purpose of all that they had endured was so that the Israelites might be an obedient people.

105:1 O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.

105:2 Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works.

105:3 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

105:4 Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually.

105:5 Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,

105:6 O offspring of his servant Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

23 Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.

24 And the Lord made his people very fruitful, and made them stronger than their foes,
25 whose hearts he then turned to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants.
26 He sent his servant Moses, and Aaron whom he had chosen.

45 that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the Lord!

Luke 10:38-42

In Luke 10, we find the closest thing Jesus gave to a sermon on busyness. Jesus drops into Martha's home, which prompted her natural response—I'll prepare food, offer him a drink, and ensure he's welcome.

Mary's response was so counter cultural. She just plonks herself down and hangs off every word that comes from Jesus' mouth.

Martha works to prepare dinner, while Mary sits and listens to Jesus. Martha asks Jesus to rebuke her sister for not helping, but instead Jesus commends Mary.

All of us can sympathise with Martha, for there is always something else that needs doing. But we also need to remember to make time to sit at Jesus' feet.

Luke 10 ³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴² there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

John 11:1-7

Jesus had a close relationship with Lazarus, and his sisters Martha and Mary. So, when Lazarus was sick it was natural for them to bring their need to Jesus. I imagine it was expected that if Jesus miraculously met the needs of so many others. He would meet their need as well. Though Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was, and expresses confidence that Lazarus' illness will not lead to death, but rather to the glory of God.

John 11:1-7 [and to verse 45]

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

⁵ **Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.** ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, ⁷ and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

⁸ "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. ¹⁰ It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

¹¹ After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

¹² His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." ¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "**I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.**"

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you."

²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵ **Jesus wept.** ³⁶ Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ **So they took away the stone.** Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

John 12 1-3 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Before entering the city of Jerusalem, Jesus stopped for dinner at Mary and Martha's house. Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet anointing them with oil while Martha prepares the food. What they did was an extravagant gesture of their love for Jesus. In the face of his impending death in less than a week, Jesus found solace and strength in the love of his friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Mary, Martha and Lazarus, offer Jesus friendship and all that friendship entails. Martha is serving Jesus. Lazarus is at the table talking to Jesus, and Mary is anointing the body of Jesus. What great love these disciples have for Jesus.

John 12:1-3 [and to verse 11]

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

³ Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,⁵ "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."

⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you,^[c] but you will not always have me."

⁹ Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

REFLECTION: Being my real self with Jesus by Michelle Kallmier Weston Creek Uniting Church

Readings

- Luke 10:38-42
- John 11:1-7 (actually till verse 45)
- John 12:1-3 (actually till verse 11)

Three stories, about 3 siblings, and their relationships with each other, with the society around them, and with Jesus.

Three different people who Jesus loved (John 11:5), and who loved him in return.

Where do these accounts of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus take you?

Jesus

He is often **unpredictable** (in all 3 accounts he surprises expectations), and sometimes **unfathomable**: even today we struggle with the fact that his wisdom operates in a different way (and on a different timescale) to ours.

He's **powerful**—he raises Lazarus from the dead!

But what struck me as I pondered these readings, was the insight they gave me into the **LIKEABILITY** of Jesus. Jesus was a really good friend.

- He SAW people truly – beyond the superficial. EG how he responds to Martha: “You are worried and upset about many things...”
- He LOVED people deeply. He clearly loved these 3 siblings, with all of their quirks; and even when he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, he wept with Mary.
- I get the sense that Jesus was a joy to know... he was the kind of guest you couldn't invite over often enough.
- And this makes me think about my image of God. He's mysterious to me in many ways, but He's also wonderfully kind, and deeply loving. He's a safe and trustworthy Person in this world where people often aren't safe or trustworthy or kind.

Lazarus

As a man, he would have had a different relationship with Jesus than his sisters did.

- EG: The 3rd passage talks about him “reclining at the table” with Jesus in the dinner given in Jesus' honour.
- This reminds me of social impact on behaviours. Whether or not it's right or wrong, how we live and what we do is impacted by the society around us.
 - o EG: I feel like Lazarus had some privileges here – more access to Jesus – that I find annoying. And he never gets in trouble for not helping with preparations! I also get irritated that it was an odd thing for Mary to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to him rather than work in the kitchen!
 - o But Jesus loved them ALL. **Equally**. He doesn't value one person above another, no matter what society says.

I also think of the cost of knowing Jesus.

- Firstly, there was the suffering (and death!) that Lazarus experienced.
 - o Those would have been real, distressing, experiences.
 - o His disappointment with his friend would have been profound in those long days, waiting futilely for Jesus to turn up.

- Jesus didn't spare him that, even though in Lazarus' case Jesus did choose to show that even death isn't final for God.
- And afterwards, his life came under threat because of Jesus: "the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him." (John 12:10-11)
 - His life had become MUCH more complicated, and probably more difficult, than it was before. There is a cost.

Mary

- (Mary and Martha remind me of the 2 sisters in Sense and Sensibility).
- I think of Mary as a "wear your heart on your sleeve" kind of a person.
 - The kind of person who probably talks a bit too loudly, breaks little social norms—either because she doesn't notice or because she doesn't care about them as much as other people do.
 - EG: after Martha goes to talk to Jesus, Mary falls at his feet to say exactly the same thing (John 11:20-21, 32).
- Mary broke social norms at least TWICE in these 3 passages.
 - Lazy? (passage 1). Attention seeking? (passage 3).
 - But Jesus defended her. Both times.
 - He saw her HEART (and loved what he saw).
 - And he criticised/corrected Martha & later Judas: who were socially "in the right" but actually their hearts weren't quite right.

Martha

- Martha was clearly a hospitable person, but in Luke 10 she is busy, distracted, and annoyed about her sister not helping. I love how human and relatable she is!
 - Jesus doesn't play along with Martha's call for him to get Mary to help her, but he doesn't just rebuke and ignore Martha either.
 - Jesus cares about Martha's heart "you are worried and upset about many things..." and he redirects her into a healthier direction: "... but few things are needed—or indeed only one."
 - Their relationship stays strong ... and when she first sees Jesus after Lazarus' death, she trusts him with the truth: "Lord... if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21).
 - Martha also makes a profound statement of faith: "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world" (John 11:27)—

which is almost identical to what Jesus commends Peter for saying (Matt 16:16-17).

- Also there's a sweet shift in actions (and attitudes?) here as Martha sends her sister to Jesus (John 11:28).

Above all, I was most surprised when I noticed the second meal in John 12: **“Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard...”**

- I had wondered if knowing that “Mary has chosen what is better” meant that Martha would chill out with her hospitality.
 - But I came to think of this 2nd meal as food cooked with LOVE, rather than obligation.
 - I can easily picture Martha hosting this meal. She clearly had the gift of hospitality: I can imagine her choosing dishes, & preparing everything beautifully.
 - And it made me think about the different siblings—the different ways they showed THEIR LOVE for Jesus.
 - Lazarus, hanging out with him as (in that culture) only a man could
 - Mary, with her impassioned, not-so-culturally-appropriate actions: sitting at Jesus’ feet, then pouring perfume over them.
 - Martha: more socially appropriate perhaps, but no less loving.
- I began to think of this 2nd meal as Martha’s perfume. Her way of pouring out the love and thankfulness in her heart.
- And I ended up where I started.
 - 3 different siblings—influenced by culture and personality.
 - But able to live together, and love each other.
 - And LOVED by Jesus, in all of their messy, quirky uniqueness.

Reflection Questions:

What struck you in these passages? I have 3 questions below, but first I invite you to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you. He may have something totally different He wants to breathe into your life.

- 1) What am I doing out of obligation rather than love?
 - Do I need to ask the Lord to restore my soul, so I can serve Him and others out of love rather than duty?

- 2) Have I done things that made me feel painfully exposed, or where I felt judged by other people ... but that Jesus knew came from a heart of love?
 - Take a moment now to SEE Him seeing you. To know what it is to NOT be misunderstood—but to instead be celebrated for who you really are.
- 3) And what about my siblings in the faith? Is Jesus asking me to give someone else space to love Him in his or her unique way (not mine)?
 - What does that look like in practice?

SONG *O God beyond all praising*

At this point during the service, I invite you to play one of the songs that you have chosen. Once again listen to the words carefully, let them wash over you, uplift you and minister to you.

Offering and prayer

Lord God,

We are sorry that we squeeze you out of our busy lives.

We are sorry that at times our hands are busy doing things for you, but our hearts are distracted and far from you.

Take your place at the very centre of our lives.

We offer our hands, our hearts, and our gifts to you.

Bless them and use them for your purpose,

And may those who receive what we have to offer.

May they be blessed and uplifted by the depth of your love for them. **Amen**

A Pandemic Prayer *(by Doug Taylor Weston Creek Uniting Church)*

O God our Father,

May we who are merely inconvenienced in this time of pandemic remember those whose lives are at risk.

May we who have no risk factors remember those who are most vulnerable.

May we who have not been touched directly by the virus remember and pray for those who have lost loved ones to its ravages.

May we who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent or feeding their families.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close remember those who don't have options.

May we who have had to cancel our trips remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who can settle in for a safe quarantine at home remember those who have no home.

As fear and blame grips our country let us choose to display love especially to those in leadership with the burden of making difficult and critical decisions.

Help us to be grateful for, and support, all those health professionals who risk the wellbeing of their own families in order to care for ours.

During this time when we cannot wrap our arms around each other physically, give us the grace to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbours.

O God give us the humility and patience to subjugate our selfish desire to return to normal as soon as possible so that we may cheerfully and diligently follow the rules designed to protect each other.

We offer these prayers in the Name of Jesus who taught us to pray saying;

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.**

SONG *The Light of the world*

At this point during the service, I invite you to play one of the songs that you have chosen. Once again listen to the words carefully, let them wash over you, uplift you and minister to you.

Blessing

We go in prayer
to work for God,
listening for love
and responding to its call.
We go into the world
with a willingness to work
and a willingness to listen.
To the in-between spaces
were we meet and are blessed by God.

May you go in peace to love and serve God. **Amen**