

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 20 July 2025 - The Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Lectionary Readings (*depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on*)

Genesis 18.1-10a; Psalm 15; Colossians 1.15-28; Luke 10.38-end

Homily

Today's homily has been written by Mrs Pat Blyth, LLM, The Mission & Ministry Department, Ely Diocese

“Mary has chosen the better part...”

This little tableau of Jesus visiting the home of Martha and Mary in a ‘certain (unspecified) village’ is a very well-known Bible story, although it is just a few verses, and occurs only in Luke’s Gospel. Its message is made clear – listening to the teaching of the Lord, especially while he is near at hand, is more important than carrying out a lot of tasks, however worthy or necessary those tasks might be. It is a story that many will smile at, as they recognise Martha in their own responses, and sympathised with her point of view. The wonderful team who clean our cathedral in Ely call themselves ‘the Marthas’, with some degree of self-deprecation. And we couldn’t do without them, or any other of the people who carry out essential routine tasks every day.

What more can this little story tell us? There is more to it than at first appears. If we are tempted to think that Jesus put Martha down, or in some way took Mary’s side in a little family disagreement, we are probably jumping to conclusions. Later in Luke’s Gospel - Chapter 15, verse 11 onwards if you want to look it up - there is another story about sibling rivalry, this time with imaginary characters, one of Jesus’ parables – the story of the Prodigal Son. Two brothers this time, but like the two sisters Martha and Mary, the elder is responsible and dutiful, while the younger is hedonistic and carefree. Once again, it is the younger who appears to have the ‘better part’ – that of going astray, and then begging forgiveness which is gladly given, followed by a huge celebration. Anyone who has ever been the responsible person in a relationship of any kind, whether with brother or sister or spouse or partner, will have some understanding of the feelings of the elder brother who resents the fuss made over the return of the younger.

In both instances, the actual visit of Jesus to his friends, and the parable, the vision of the kingdom of God is an unexpected one – a place that cannot be obtained by mere duty alone, but where there is there is ample opportunity for someone who wants to understand more like Mary, or who goes off the rails but wants to return, like the younger son. Not that Martha and the elder son on are by any means excluded – indeed their loyalty is highly valued – “You are always with me, and all that I have is yours” the father in the parable tells his eldest. It is this unexpected vision of the kingdom that should make all of us, and our

leaders in particular, beware of ever claiming that “God is on my side”. As a person who enjoys competitive sport, I have discovered that God does not take sides. I have often hoped He might help me to win my match because I am, after all, a Lay Minister, but it doesn’t happen. I cannot claim moral high ground, because my opponent’s faith, or lack of it, is unknown to me, but both of us are fully known by God, and no preference made. The politician who after a victory in an election, or in armed conflict, claims he or she must be in the right because God is clearly on their side needs to beware – things can change very quickly!

We can be fairly sure that this brief picture of Martha and Mary in Luke is just a small episode in what is actually a very important relationship in Jesus’ ministry. Martha and Mary return in John’s Gospel – Chapter 11, verse 38 onwards if you want to look it up, - when we learn that the unnamed village was Bethany, just outside Jerusalem, where Jesus returns before that final week of his life. It seems Martha and Mary have a brother, Lazarus, a disciple though not one of the twelve, who has been following Jesus’ ministry, and whom Jesus has grown to love. In John’s mention of this family, Lazarus has recently died, and Jesus has delayed getting there so has been unable to save him. Martha has learnt a lot; although she initially reproaches Jesus for taking so long, she adds “But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him..... I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” And far from stopping her sister from seeing the Lord, she calls her, and says “The teacher is here, and is calling for you.”

Martha has learnt from her first encounter with the Lord, and we too have learnt from Martha and Mary a little bit more than simply not to be too preoccupied to listen. We have learnt that the kingdom of God is full of surprises, and that we cannot simply expect an inheritance through duty and diligence alone. Who God will choose, and why, is another of those holy mysteries we hope we might understand one day. Humility, a readiness to learn, and a willingness to confess mistakes seem every bit as valuable as righteousness. But the overriding message seems to be that knowledge of the human heart belongs to God alone – it is He who knows the innermost thoughts of all our hearts, and what motivates us in all our words and actions. Today’s Psalm starts with the Psalmist asking “O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?” Let’s hope it is every one of us. Amen.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?

- I wonder whether you identify more with Martha or Mary? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how Martha and Mary were feeling at the beginning, and how this changed?
- I wonder how you feel as you hear the story unfold?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

The Collect for the 5th Sunday after Trinity:

**Almighty and everlasting God,
by whose Spirit the whole body of the church is governed and sanctified:
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,
that in their vocation and ministry
they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.**

To the bidding, “Hear us”, the response is “**Hear us good Lord.**”

Let us pray for our world in this hot summer where tensions are flaring and conflicts increasing. We pray for the people of Gaza and of Israel, of Russia and of Ukraine, of the Sudan, and all places where there is warfare, poverty and suffering. We earnestly pray that there will not be another world war, and we ask you to guide the thoughts of all our leaders into the ways of peace.

Hear us.....**Hear us good Lord.**

We pray for all people of faith in its many forms, and especially Dagmar our acting Bishop and all priests and ministers in the Diocese of Ely, that they may be imaginative and inclusive as they lead worship in our various churches. We also pray for the many people who carry out countless other tasks of administration and maintenance, giving thanks for the differing contributions made by so many.

[Especially we pray for God’s blessing on this church of.....; its Minister/Ministry Team and helpers.....and for the local community of the parish(es) of.....].

Hear us.....**Hear us good Lord.**

Let us hold before God our friends and our families, the schools about to break for the summer, the safety and well-being of those going away on holiday and let us give thanks for the opportunity of rest and refreshment, leisure and time shared with loved ones over the summer.

As harvest time approaches, let us pray for farmers and all who work on the land, and produce, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, the food that we all need to survive.

Give comfort to any who are sick at this time [.....list.....].

Hear us.....**Hear us good Lord.**

Finally, we remember those who have gone before us in faith, and whose memory we forever cherish. [names.....].

May they rest forever in the loving arms of Jesus our Saviour and be free from any pain and sorrow in the light and love of God our heavenly Father.

Merciful Father; **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Our Father, etc.

Suggested hymns/songs

All heaven declares
At the name of Jesus
Be still and know that I am God
Be still, my soul
Be thou my vision
Hail to the Lord's Anointed
It is a thing most wonderful
My God, how wonderful you are
Peace, perfect peace, is the gift
Seek ye first
The God of Abraham, praise
What a friend we have in Jesus.

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)