

Hear the good news! In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. The old life has passed away—and a new life has begun. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn **God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending** **#663**

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination

O holy One, may your word, read and proclaimed, pour out until its fragrance fills this house and our lives. Then, anointed with your word, send us out to share the good news we have received. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who is with us always. **Amen.**

Scripture

Hebrew Bible **Isaiah 43:16–21** **[B#672/W#746]²**

Hebrew Bible **Psalms 126** **[B#572/W#634]**

Epistle **Philippians 3:4b–14** **[B#198/W#211]**

Gospel **John 12:1–8** **[B#109/W#106]**

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

Hymn **In suffering love** **#696**

O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts acceptable to you, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

The passage from John's gospel took place six days before the Passover when Jesus arrived in Bethany at the home of his friends, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. We learn of Mary's preparation of Jesus for his death and a deeper glimpse into Judas Iscariot. Mary, faithfully devoted herself and all that she had as a witness and a disciple, in word and action, to Jesus. Judas was revealed as the one who would steal from their common funds and later betray Jesus to the authorities. In this passage we hear Judas speak of his outrage as he reasoned that the nard should have been sold and the money given to the poor. However, the narrator of the story shares that Judas was less concerned about the poor and more interested in the amount of money spent. The nard, a perfumed ointment, was worth three hundred denarii, which was about a year's worth of wages.

² Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

Jesus' response: "Let her alone!" was a sharp reprimand to Judas as he offered support for Mary's actions. Jesus defended her and added, "Let her keep it for the day of my burial." Mary understood what was coming in contrast to the confusion experienced by the other disciples.

When Jesus spoke of "The poor you always have with you" he referenced Deuteronomy 15:11: "For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand... to the needy and to the poor, in the land". Ethicist and theologian Stanley Hauerwas wrote, "The poor that we always have with us is Jesus. It is to the poor that all extravagance is to be given."

Jesus rebuked Judas for speaking against the generous gift from Mary. The gift was generous in many ways. The expensive perfumed ointment that was used to prepare a body for burial was an acknowledgement of his coming death. It also draws our attention to the spirit of abundance of Jesus. Generosity encourages generosity in every aspect of life. It is possible to give generously, love generously, and live generously. In order to do so it is with the premise of abundance. When we love generously we do so knowing that love grows in proportion to the amount of love we share. We participate in caring for others in need by sharing resources. When love or resources are held back in fear of scarcity, the amount available seems to diminish. Jesus actively demonstrated the perspective of abundance. At Cana, 180 gallons of new wine created an abundance for a wedding. More than five thousand hungry were fed by the Sea of Galilee, with twelve baskets of leftovers. When Jesus encouraged Simon Peter to go back out after a futile night of fishing, his boat almost capsized when large fish jumped into the net.

John's Gospel encourages the reader to see how Jesus reveals the grace and truth of God. He came to save the lost. He demonstrates that the Good Shepherd searches for the lost sheep. So, we wonder whether Judas might be saved by the Good Shepherd. George W. Stroup wrote, "the grace of Jesus Christ includes both the faithful and the unfaithful. Both are included within the bright, transforming light the cross casts in a dark world."

There are few passages so packed with beauty and truth as this anointing scene at Bethany. Matthew and Mark place it in the house of Simon the leper, and the woman who anoints Jesus is unnamed. Matthew and Mark wrote that the woman anointed his head, a prophetic act anointing him king and Messiah in the empire of Caesar. This action echoes

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injustice, for hopeful progress towards reconciliation, and healing in the face of disease and danger. We thank you for your presence with us in all things.

In this unpredictable world, we pray for those whose lives are caught in terror and oppression. We pray for those who live where they are afraid to walk freely. We lift up all who are overwhelmed and discouraged by the uncertainty of this time.

As the stories of Jesus turn us toward the cross we pray for those who also walk the road of suffering. We remember before you those who suffer with the despair of chronic pain, sorrow, and critical illness. We pray for all who are exhausted as they deal with increased demands and fewer resources in their work. We pray for all who struggle with mental illness. May they be strengthened by your Spirit of justice and mercy.

God of love, we lift up those who travel the long journey of grief and mourning. We bring before you the people on our hearts this day: Ruth Talbot, Lois, Rudy and Grace; Bonnie; Rob; Courtney and Kyla. We lift up all those who prefer to remain un-named as they face immense challenges of health and finances. Merciful God, accept our prayers, spoken and unspoken. Spirit of healing and hope bring peace to our lives and this world you love. We join our voices together, across space and time, in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray ... **Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn

A prophet woman broke a jar

#588

To Go Forth In God's Name

Commissioning and Benediction

Isa. 43:19b; Phil. 3:10

By her gift, Mary prepared for the death and burial of Jesus. As the season of Lent turns toward Palm Sunday and Holy Week we are mindful of our strengths and challenges as disciples.

May God guide you through the desert places. May Christ lead you into knowing him more deeply. May the Holy Spirit fill you with overflowing faith.

Postlude Holy, Holy, Holy

623

#727

Let there be light

Let there be light; let there be understanding; Let all the nations gather; let them be face to face. Open our lips; open our minds to ponder; Open the door of concord, opening into grace.

Perish the sword; perish the angry judgement; Perish the bombs and hunger; perish the fight for gain. Hallow our love; hallow the deaths of martyrs; Hallow their holy freedom; hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come; your spirit turn to language; Your people speak together; your spirit never fade. Let there be light; open our hearts to wonder; Perish the way of terror; hallow the world God made.

623 Holy, holy, holy Words: traditional Music: F Schubert

Refrain: Holy, holy, holy, God almighty Lord!

Holy, holy, holy, everywhere adored!

God without beginning, God eternal One reigns and rules forever all beneath the sun

Refrain

Power and love and wonder, circling round God's throne, Praise our God most holy, Lord of Life alone **Refrain**

367 Jesus, the very thought of thee

Jesus, the very thought of thee With sweetness fills my breast, But sweeter far thy face to see, And in thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame, Nor can the memory find A sweeter sound than thy blest name, O Saviour dear and kind.

O hope of every contrite heart, O joy of all the meek, Tho those who fall how kind thou art, How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah, this Nor tongue nor pen can show; The love of Jesus, what it is None but the loved ones know.

Jesus, our only joy be thou, As thou our prize wilt be; Jesus, be thou our glory now And through eternity.

588 A prophet woman broke a jar

A prophet-woman broke a jar by Love's divine appointing. With rare perfume she filled the room presiding and anointing. A prophet-woman broke a jar, the sneers of scorn defying.

With rare perfume she filled the room, preparing Christ for dying. A faithful woman left a tomb by love's divine commission.

She saw, she heard, she preached the Word, arising from submission. A faithful woman left a tomb, with resurrection gospel; she saw, she heard, she preached the Word, apostle to apostles.

Though woman-wisdom, woman-truth, for centuries were hidden, unsung, unwritten and unheard, derided and forbidden, the Spirit's breath, the Spirit's fire, on free and slave descending, can tumble our dividing walls, our shame and sadness mending.

The Spirit knows, the Spirit calls, by Love's divine ordaining, the friends we need, to serve and lead, their powers and gifts unchanging. The Spirit knows, the Spirit calls, from women, men and children, the friends we need, to serve and lead. Rejoice, and make them welcome!

663 God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending

God, whose giving knows no ending, From your rich and endless store, Nature's wonder, Jesus' wisdom, Costly cross, grave's shattered door: Gifted by you, we turn to you, Offering up ourselves in praise; Thankful song shall rise forever, Gracious donor of our days.

Skills and time are ours for pressing Towards your goals of Christ, your Son: All at peace in health and freedom, Races joined, the church made one. Now direct our daily labour, Lest we strive for self alone; Born with talents, make us servants Fit to answer at your throne.

Treasure too you have entrusted, Gain through powers your Grace conferred Ours to use for home and kindred, And to spread the gospel word. Open wide our hands in sharing, As we heed Christ's ageless call, Healing, teaching and reclaiming, Serving you by loving all.

696 In suffering love

In suffering love the thread of life Is woven through our care, For God is with us: not alone Our pain and toil we bear.

There is a rock, a place secure Within the storm's cold blast; Concealed within the suffering night God's covenant stands fast.

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In love's deep womb our fears are held; There God's rich tears are sown And bring to birth, in hope new-born, The strength to journey on.

Lord, to our hearts your joy commit, Into our hands your pain, So send us out to touch the world With blessings in your name.

In suffering love our God comes now, Hope's vision born in gloom; With tears and laughter shared and blessed The desert yet will bloom.