**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**3rd April 2022**

John 12:1-8

**Gathering**

It is a moment of intense holiness

A potent moment

Full of extravagance

Misunderstood by those

Who see things in black and white

Who quickly measure one act against another

Expensive perfume against the world’s poor

Right and wrong

Without the subtle

Many layered story that is the kingdom

The perfume pours

Over the saviours feet

That sets free the extravagance

That the joy of resurrected life brings

A thanksgiving for Mary’s brother

Lazarus

That is heartfelt

And alive

And in such extravagance

We turn to all our neighbours

Rich and poor

With the joy of the kingdom

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick parish… and thank you for the invitation to joy you today… We’re in Bethany, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus live… They are at a meal, a thanksgiving meal for the return of Lazarus… and Mary is moved by such thanksgiving to honour Jesus… but those in the wings… disciples like Judas… are confused, and upset, and angry at how this measures against the values of the kingdom… How do we respond… you and I?

**Prayer**

Loving God

May we meet you

In the extravagance of the kingdom:

The love that holds us

The grace that renews us

And forgiveness that calls us

These gifts…

And in such a place

Come alive again:

In the midst of all that is in shadow

May we find the light,

In the place of hurt

Find the healing,

In the place of sorrow

Be held by compassion,

These gifts…

And turn towards each other

In forgiveness and renewal

And make life possible again

For our neighbour

Share such generosity

With eyes open to such in the world

Places we share the cost of the kingdom

And give thanks

And receive joy

These gifts…

And gather as your people

Wherever we are

With the questions we have

And the doubts we hold

And in our honesty

Trust that which is greater than us

A love beyond our own

A hope deeper than we know

And live into these

These gifts…

As we share the global prayer

Our Father, who is in heaven

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power

And the glory, forever

Amen

**Scripture Introduction**

The setting for this story is important: Jesus is at a thanksgiving meal organised by Mary and Martha: a couple of his best friends regularly mentioned in the bible. It is more than likely it is a meal to give thanks for Lazarus’ return to life which happened in the chapter before. So the mood is celebratory. It is thanksgiving. For the return for Lazarus from the dead.

Mary has some nard. Some scriptures interpret what she does as a preparation for his burial. But that is perhaps writing back into the story the outcome the writers already knew. For John, the gospel we read today, it reads more that Mary has been compelled in thanksgiving to honour Jesus for bringing her brother back to life. The perfume actually celebrates life in contrast to—and in defiance of—death. But you may hear it differently.

**Reading: John 12:1-8**

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.”

**Reflection**

That costly nard:

Did you have any idea what was happening?

Was this some sign you understood

Or, like us, did it take you aback?

Were you human enough

To be surprised by Mary’s wastefulness?

Did it go through your mind to wonder

What others were thinking,

As they watched the perfume pour,

The smell take over the room,

And the awkward embarrassment

Of this devotion

Of extravagance?

This generous foot washing

Is not the only instance, is it?

This is but the first,

This giving,

This serving,

This generosity given to another…

Did it give you ideas?

Did Mary’s action

Affect you,

Make you think,

And in her natural response to you

In thanksgiving for her brother’s return

For that is why you were there was it not:
you were invited to a meal at their house

And Lazarus was there,

The resurrection man eating with you,

And his sister, not for some event still to come

Some anointing of a body

(That surely is just a gospel writer’s interpretation)

But in thanksgiving for the return of her bother

She washed your feet with nard,

And you saw then,

A sign of the kingdom,

A heavenly act

In the action of serving another.

For it is only the next day

You make that same sign,

Take up the same posture Marys took with you,

But this time it was towards the disciples.

Footwashing

Before supper.

The upper room,

And the bowl,

And the towel,

And Peter arguing with you:
did he not see what happened the night before

In Lazarus’ house

And Mary

And the nard

And was happening again

Except it was him

On the receiving end?

Is this not the same thing?

She washed your feet,

And you have taken that extravagant example,

And returned it,

But to the disciples.

You wash the disciples feet

And make that core statement

That ‘nothing-else-matters-but-this’ statement:
"love one another as I have loved you”

And in so saying,

You ask the disciples to do,

To return the same act,

Not back to you,

But to the world.

And in turn, the disciples find their calling

To wash the feet of the world.

You have returned Mary’s gift

Multiplied beyond measure.

Mary’s extravagant gift

Preempts a chain reaction of radical hospitality:

From Mary, to you,

From you, to the disciples,

From the disciples,

In that command to love one another,

Back to the world.

And when Judas complains

And you quote scripture back to him

‘The poor always being with us’

Why does no one hear you quote Deuteronomy:

"Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth”

And thus hear the second part of that verse

That those around you already knew

“I therefore command you,

‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.’”

The pouring of perfume

Your own foot-washing

Turns us towards our neighbour

The foot washing of the disciples

Are turned towards washing the feet of the the poor

The oppressed

The disheartened

The downtrodden

"Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.’”

This is the extravagance

To which we are called

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

May the world know

And live within

The extravagant love

That is the kingdom

That we might live towards Ukraine

And Syria and Yemen and Afghanistan

With such generosity

Towards peace

Towards truth

Towards justice

For these gifts the world needs

For the folk who are broken and afraid

And whose lives have been reduced

By someone else’s selfish arrogance

Extravagant love

Towards the least and poorest

So many now below the absolute poverty line

May we change the way we do things

To be more generous

Measure how we treat the least

As a measure of our own morality

Extravagant love

Towards the refugee

Of any culture

Not just those most like us

Yet to all who are homeless

Stateless

Frightened

Trafficked

Extravagant love

Towards our families and friends

Those whom we know are ill

Physically and mentally

For those anxious about life

Worried about jobs, food, the cost of living

Loving God

Not just in our prayers

But in our living

May we turn towards those

Whose feet we are called to wash

And whose lives we are called to share

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**