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Monday 06 April, 2020

REFLECTION

Yesterday we examined the narrative of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Sometime during the day, Greek visitors from abroad tried to use "connections" (the disciple Philip) to organise a meeting with **The Man** Himself. We read, *Philip told Andrew about it and they went together to ask Jesus.*

We don't know the outcome, but our reflection yesterday implied Jesus was not too keen. *I am on my way to be glorified; through death comes life. Do these people want to see me to say to their friends - "Guess what! We had a private audience with Jesus shortly before He was crucified and you know what He said?!", or do these people want to follow me, carry their own cross, suffer their own death, through which will come new life for many?*

Contrast this with the events a mere five days prior!

John chapter 12 begins with Jesus arriving in Bethany for dinner at the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, for what appears to be a thanksgiving dinner for the miracle of Lazarus being brought back to life, four days after he was declared dead. Imagine the relief of two sisters who were facing the bleak prospect of life without a man around the house, for that was the nature of society at that time.

Focus with me today, on four acts of worship by four people.

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First Lazarus. We know very little about this man other than the fact that he was brother to Martha and Mary, that he was very sick and he died from his illness. We know that Jesus and this family were close friends, hence the two sisters frantic call to Jesus to come ASAP as “*Your dear friend is very sick*”.

Four days after his certified death, Jesus calls him out of the burial chamber. He hobbles out as his hands and feet were tied in grave clothes and his face wrapped in a head cloth.

At this thanksgiving dinner, Lazarus is seated next to Jesus, a place of honour, as he rightly should be.

What is interesting is that in all the accounts of Lazarus, he **never** speaks a word, yet the news of his coming back to life spread far and wide.

Lazarus is a silent witness of what Jesus had done for him and his family. No words were necessary. He does not say, *Here I am! Look at me! I'm alive!* The One who brought him back to life takes centre stage.

There are times in life, when we realise God's hand of protection, of healing, of provision, of care, sometimes His powerful presence which gives us courage to carry on.

Staying close to Him without saying a word is a powerful statement of worship, because all glory goes to God!

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Second Martha. During an earlier visit, she complained to Jesus that sister Mary was spending inordinate time listening to Him, and left her to do the hard work of preparing the meal and getting the house ready.

Two words describe Martha's act of worship, *Martha served* (v. 2). Martha was doing what she was gifted in doing, and busy with that for which she was responsible (which leads us to believe, perhaps she was the elder of the two sisters).

Hospitality, very different from being friendly, is a powerful act of worship. Making people welcome in one's home, preparing and sharing with them with God blessing to you, caring for their welfare and well-being, is a **very** powerful act of worship. Honouring a person by making them a valued guest in your home, is to honour God, and this **is** worship.

Next, dear Mary, who teaches us humility in worship:

- She sat at Jesus' feet and learned (Luke 10:39)
- She fell at Jesus' feet and surrendered (John 11:32)
- She anointed Jesus' feet and honoured Jesus (John 12:3)

It was common to wash the feet of a guest when they entered a home, a task given to the lowest of slaves. Mary's act of washing Jesus feet was *humility in worship*.

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Mary's gift in worship was *extreme*. Worth a labourer's annual wages, Mary gave what would have been considered a family's investment, to be used when times were difficult.

Finally, Mary's act of worship was remarkably *unselfconscious*. Not only did she give the gift of the expensive oil, she also wiped His feet with her hair. She let down her hair in public, something a Jewish woman would rarely do, considered to be a mark of loose morals. But Mary's act of worship was not to garner public attention. Her act of worship was to wash the feet that travelled the length and breadth of Israel for three years, teaching, preaching and healing. Now was the opportunity to express her worship in this beautiful and touching act.

Finally, Judas the Treasurer. Money was the measure of life for Judas. *Mary has just wasted the worth of a labourer's annual wages which could have been sold and money given to the poor.*

Judas' love of money was well known and John describes it well in verse 6. Judas worshipped the most valuable thing in this world - **money**. Nothing wrong with money; we all need it to live, but the worship of God cannot be measured by money. In His greatest teaching, the sermon on the mountain side, Jesus said, *"You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one*

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god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't worship both God and Money."

There is a fifth kind of worship which we saw yesterday: the visiting Greeks sought an audience with "*The Great Man Himself*". Many people live by the mistaken belief that being in the presence of a *Holy Person*, is blessing in itself. There is none Holy as Jesus the Christ who came from the Father, and the Father Himself.

Whom do we worship, and how do we worship? Two questions to consider this Monday.

AMEN