

**7<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

## **Mary's choice**

As some of you are aware this weekend is a particularly busy one for me. I will be in meetings in the Synod all day Friday and again on Saturday. Then comes Sunday morning worship and Sunday evening Lenten study group. I am a very slow reader, particularly of technical and complex material. I find reading the myriad papers in preparation for those meetings and preparing to speak to some of the agenda items that require my leadership tiring. When I get tired I can get a little grumpy, and often a bit short. So often I feel that I am paddling in deeper waters than I feel comfortable in.

In the midst of that we are invited this week to reflect on the story of Mary taking a jar of particularly expensive perfume and using it to wash and perfume Jesus' feet as he accepts the hospitality of her home. John's Gospel doesn't include any comment about how Mary's sister Martha was grumpy at her sister for copping out of the work that needed to be done to be a good hostess.

The focus is absolutely on the choice Mary made to live in that moment. Such is the power of living in the moment with celebration. She recognised the awesomeness of God being present in her home, with her, sharing her life, letting her share his. Her response was to put pragmatic considerations aside for the time, to abandon herself in an outpouring of love and devotion as she placed herself at Jesus' feet, anointed them, even wiping them with her hair.

As a pragmatist who believes in observing proper process, Mary's prodigal, expansive act of abandoned worship is confronting. Yet it is so beautiful. The fragrance of that act of devotion filled the whole house. Every other person in that house was impacted by her extraordinary act of worship. Some chastised her for her debauched behaviour, for her lack of self-dignity. Others chided her for not giving priority to charitable possibilities. Yet none were unaffected by the sheer purity of her love, more pure even than that perfume.

The beauty and selfless extravagance of her worship continues to waft through our own time and place in history. It invites us to loosen the restraints of self-consciousness and misplaced dignity to let ourselves be lost in abandoned love and devotion for Jesus in our worship. There is time enough for the busyness the rest of the week.

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**14<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

## **Vote for Jesus this election**

Well, the Federal Election has now been called. We know when we will be required to cast our vote. The pollies are well and truly out-and-about in full campaign mode. What a great weekend to be reading the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into the holy city of Jerusalem, because it was unmistakably a deliberate political event.

The Roman party was out in all its arrogant pomp seeking to retain its grip on power, even as they taxed the people into poverty and imposed their law-and-order platform with an iron fist. They didn't care for their outlying districts beyond protecting their borders and fuelling their lust for wealth. Then there was the Herodian party who had sold their soul to their coalition partners in the Roman party so that they could have their diminishing spot in the sunlight even as they didn't listen to the people and advocated policies detrimental to their constituency. There was also the Jewish party, riven with division between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, the progressives and the conservatives in their ultra-religious party, who also supported taxing the people with no thought for their capacity to pay, and were very judgemental of those who weren't like them. Add into the mix the very radical Maccabean party of zealots who didn't care much for obeying the rules of the Romans who presumed they owned the right to rule and you've got a tinderbox of political conflict.

That sounds very much like what is on offer in our election.

But then into that cauldron of hot political ferment Jesus rode on a humble donkey advocating a new order of peace and reconciliation, of bias toward the poor, and a call for people to join him in implementing a new social order of things. He didn't use overtly religious language. Not until his trial did he accept the title of King. Instead he spoke in contextual parables, of God's vision of a just world, exercising good stewardship of God's complex delicate interrelated creation that has been entrusted to our care.

It is a reminder to us of the need to attend closely, not so much to protestations of Christianity, but to closely examine the policy frameworks of the respective party and discern which we discern to most closely resemble the framework of Jesus who announced his ministry in terms of bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and letting the oppressed go free (Luke 4:18).

Jesus' manifesto for his ministry is as applicable to our choice in this election as it was in Jesus' own time in history and political context.

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**21<sup>st</sup> April 2019**

**Renewable energy and renewed life – Easter Day**

You might have noticed that renewable sources of energy are very much in the news. Our major political parties both seem to understand that they can no longer ignore the cost of continuing our reliance on fossil fuels and are actively promoting renewable energy sources. It's taken an election cycle to get there, but it is there now. It is a matter of critical importance to the future of life on this planet.

Don't think this is being melodramatic. The reality is that for many species it is already literally a matter of life or death. Species are becoming extinct at an alarming rate, and that is expected to escalate rapidly if we allow the planet to continue to warm even further than it already has. While aspects of life will manage to change and adapt, we are standing at a critical moment in time when the very future of our planet is being determined by decisions made in this present time. Economists have been warning for a number of years that the cost to the world's economy long term is far greater than any present hit to our economy and lifestyle.

It's a good subject to come up in this Easter season too. For isn't the story we gather around in this season, the ultimate renewable energy story of all time? By the grace of God, the One whose life was inextricably linked to the purposes of the Creator in this world, when it was thought that he was dead, God raised him up again. It came at extraordinary cost to God to offer us this renewed life. Ever since we have known that that which is connected to that ultimate source of renewable energy will also be raised to new life as we join God's cause in our world.

We talk about love as being the core of God's life and work. Then we who say we love God must surely love the world he created and trusted to our stewardship. Just as God raised Jesus from death to life, we must play our part in raising the future of our planet from death to life by the decisions we make today.

It seems to me that if we played our part in this respect, God might join in our Easter exclamations of Hallelujah!

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**28<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

**No column this week**

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