*Order of service*

Holy Wednesday 2020

You might like to start this time of worship by listening to Alabaster Jar, by Rend Collective.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJsLcwScEDA>

*Reckless love (iSing worship)*

Mark 14:1-11

***Reflection***

We continue our travel through Holy Week, with a story that took place on Wednesday, 2 days before the Passover. For those of you who don’t know me, I’m Helen Hooley, minister in the Lincoln circuit, welcome.

Our story today is really two stories, one framing the other.

We have first - the need for a traitor

Then the unnamed woman

Then finally - the advent of a traitor.

It’s an exercise in contrasts.

We have the worst action possible - betraying Jesus

- so why does anointing Jesus imply the best?

For us, Lent is a journey in time from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday.

For Mark, this is a story of Jesus preparing his disciples for what would happen to him when he demonstrated against Roman imperial power concerning its violence, and against Jewish high-priestly authority concerning its injustice. But, perhaps more importantly, Jesus attempts to prepare them for their individual and communal participation in that death and resurrection. And here we have the first person who positively believed Jesus’ message - that unnamed woman with her eternal alabaster jar of ointment.

Jesus foretells his death and resurrection three times; the third in chapter 10

“They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them…and those who followed were afraid.” (Mark 10:32)

And that is the proper response - “those who followed were afraid” - because Jesus is challenging all his followers - not just the twelve disciples - to accept that communal destiny of death and resurrection.

And then we have this action by the unnamed woman. She alone, of all those who heard Jesus’ prophecies of his death and resurrection, believed him and drew the obvious conclusion. ‘Since (not IF) you are going to die and rise, I must anoint you now.’ She is, for Mark, the first believer. She is, for us, the first Christian. And she believed from the word of Jesus before any discovery of an empty tomb.

But her action is also a graphic demonstration of the paradoxical leadership cited by Jesus for himself and all his followers, on the model of child, servant and slave. The unnamed woman is not only the first believer, she is also the model leader. She represents the perfect disciple-leader, and is contrasted with Judas, who represents the worst one possible.

Mark gives absolutely no hint of Judas’ motive in betraying Jesus. Mark’s emphasis is not on Judas’ motive, whatever it was, but on Judas’ membership in the Twelve. He is always “Judas-one-of-the-Twelve”, just in case we might ever forget it. His betrayal is simply the worst example of how those closest to Jesus failed him dismally in Jerusalem.

The traitor has entered into an agreement with those who collaborate with imperial rule. And so Wednesday ends, and the plot has been set in motion.

(Ref: The Last Week, M J Borg and J D Crossman).

Let’s pray.

Jesus

Once more we remember that last week

before you faced the cross -

your pain and hurt as you faced betrayal

denial, rejection and abandonment,

and we confess we have added to your pain.

**Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us.**

Through our thoughts, words and actions,

so often we have deserted you when you needed us most.

**Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us.**

Through our lack of thought, our failure to speak,

and our reluctance to act,

so many times we have denied

the faith and love we declare.

**Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us.**

We have cared too much for the good opinion of others.

We have been fearful to contemplate the true cost of discipleship.

Like lost sheep, we have gone astray.

**Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us.**

Yet you have called us to be your Church.

You have forgiven us, cleansed and restored us,

giving your own life for our sakes.

**Receive our thanks**

**Receive our praise**

**And help us to follow you more faithfully**

**For in your name we pray.**

**Amen.**

(c) Nick Fawcett, Prayers for all seasons.

*When I survey (iSing worship)*

*OR STF 279 O Precious sight, my Saviour stands… May I never lose the wonder…*

You might like to close this time of worship by listening to By My Side, Godspell.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fX6dq7cNIOA>