



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

April 6, 2025
5th Sunday in Lent

Announcements

Juice boxes are still needed at Street Help Shelter. The Welcome Centre Shelter for Women needs granola bars, fruit rollup-type items and another snack item for snack packs for children at the centre. Please leave donated items on the table in the Narthex.

Coming Up

Mark your calendars for April 12. The second in the Trinity Arts concert series begins at 4 p.m. The concert will feature the Woodward String Quartet from the Detroit Symphony. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students. Spread the word, invite family and friends. A reception follows the concert. Proceeds support our Music Outreach Program.

Midweek Holden Services will be part of our Lenten Season. The informal services will take place in the Fellowship Hall Wednesdays until April 16. There will be a simple meal of soup and bread at 5 p.m. and the service will begin at 6 p.m.

We Remember in our Prayers

In Residence: Cordelle

Members: Bunny, Donna, Ed, Joan, Susan, Connie, Brenda

Friends & Family: Anna, Asdis, Audrey, Dot, Jean, Ken, Mary, Randy, Roger, Rose, Frank, Tanya, Nash, Jeff

Thames Area Clergy: Rev. Stephen Gross, Interim Pastor, Trinity, London

Introduction to the day

Our God makes all things new. In the first reading God promises it. In the gospel Mary anticipates it, anointing Jesus' feet with costly perfume in preparation for the day of his burial. In the second reading Paul recalls his transformation from the persecutor Saul into an apostle. In baptism, God's new person (you!) rises daily from the deadly mire of trespasses and sins.

Hymns

ACS #1018 Deep Peace

ACS #1038 Nada Te Turbe (3x)

ELW #529 Jesus we are gathering (3x)

ELW 406 Holy Spirit Come to Us

Prayer of the day

Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness, and your grace waters our desert. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love given to all through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

AMEN

First reading Isaiah 43:16-21

¹⁶ Thus says the Lord,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
¹⁷ who brings out chariot and horse,
army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched
like a wick:
¹⁸ Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not
perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.

²⁰ The wild animals will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
²¹ the people whom I formed for
myself
so that they might declare my praise.

Psalm: 126

¹ When the Lord restored the
for- | tunes of Zion,
then were we like | those who
dream.

² **Then was our mouth filled with
laughter, and our tongue
with | shouts of joy.**

**Then they said among the
nations, "The Lord has done
great | things for them."**

³ The Lord has done great | things for
us,

and we are | glad indeed.

⁴ **Restore our for- | tunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses | of the
Negeb.**

⁵ Those who | sowed with tears
will reap with | songs of joy.

⁶ **Those who go out weeping,
carry- | ing the seed,
will come again with joy,
shoulder- | ing their sheaves.**

Second reading: Philipians 3:4b-14

[Paul writes:] ^{4b} If anyone else has
reason to be confident in the flesh, I
have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth

day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷ Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: John 12:1-8

¹ Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ² There they gave a dinner for him.

Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³ 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. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶ (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.) ⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Sermon

What's that smell?

Let's consider our noses this morning.

Science tells us that smells are processed by the olfactory bulb, which starts inside the nose and runs along the bottom of the brain. The olfactory bulb is directly connected to the two brain areas that are tied to emotion and memory.

Some people will smell fresh bread and their mind drifts back on the aroma to a time in their grandmother's kitchen or even to some church event of their childhood.

The smell of pine might take you back to helping out in your father's

workshop or maybe a recollection of a camping trip up north.

Last summer, Gracie our beagle, got skunked one night by the back fence.

The smell reminded me of a night more than 50 years ago when my first dog ... a beagle too, by the way ... got skunked one night in Connecticut. In both cases, the aroma lingered in the house for days. Through that earlier memory ... I thought about the two of us exploring the woods that stretched beyond the backyard.

All because of a certain unmistakable smell.

This morning, John shares the story of Jesus' visit with dear friends ... Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

John tells us that Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been in the tomb for four days. Martha serves the meal, as Jesus, Lazarus and the disciples all recline around the table.

The air in the home is filled with the mingling smells of the meal being cooked over the fire. The aroma of friendship and community wafts through the house.

There might even be a lingering scent in the air from earlier.

Perhaps, there was still a hint of death from Lazarus' tomb ... carried into the home by the sisters' brother.

There might have been a hint of licorice in the air from the myrrh that was used to prepare Lazarus for burial ... or a whiff of cloves that had been placed in his hair before he was put in the tomb.

It would be an olfactory reminder of the women's sadness a few days earlier. But that feeling is overcome through Mary's actions this morning.

While Jesus reclined with the others, Mary poured a pound of perfume ... made from expensive nard ... the product of a plant found in India ... on his feet. Mary anointed Jesus with so much perfume that she had to sop up the excess with her hair.

Imagine ... the aroma that now fills the air in the home ... the sweet smell overwhelming everything else that was there ... good smells and bad ... the food ... the animals that were no doubt nearby ... the smell of death.

The perfume just overwhelms ... overcomes ... all those aromas.

That ... that is what love abundant ... the product of Mary's grace-upon-grace devotion ... does to those in present in the home. It overwhelms everyone and everything.

Mary's gift is so overwhelming that Judas complains that the perfume could have been sold to help the poor ... although John is quick to point out that Judas just wants the cash for himself. The cost of the nard-based perfume ... by Judas' reckoning ... was the equivalent of almost a year's wages for a labourer.

Nard was used by kings and priests to sanctify the tabernacle and the temple and each other ... which makes some sense because usually only kings and priests would have enough money to purchase the stuff in quantity. Still, they

used it sparingly ... not like Mary ... who used it to excess.

Judas' comment shows that he doesn't recognize the true value of Mary's offering. Judas cannot understand the worth of Jesus' love and of Mary's reciprocal love ... a love that comes as she recognizes that Jesus' time with them is nearing an end.

Lutheran scholar Matt Skinner says that ... by her actions ... Mary is the first preacher of the crucifixion because she knew the cost of Jesus' death and that no price can be placed on such a selfless act of love.

Mary's act is an expression of her deep and love for Jesus ... and such extravagance would be hard to ignore by those present. Imagine the response if we were to show such extravagant love to others in our community or to those we serve.

Jesus tells Judas and the disciples not to question Mary's actions or her extravagance. The perfume was purchased with his burial in mind not for resale to benefit the common purse.

Jesus tells them that "you will always have the poor with you."

Some use this as justification to not helping the poor ... that a church's resources can be better used elsewhere.

But here's the thing ... the original Greek of this line can also be read as "keep the poor with you always."

The way we heard it this morning makes it seem that no matter what we do, the task of helping the poor is insurmountable. No matter how many

people are raised up, there will always be more who require help.

The second way to understand the line is more directive and speaks to our call as disciples ... telling us to carry the poor ... to lessen their burdens ... to comfort them ... to heal them ... to keep others at the centre of our lives.

To do so, demonstrates the love that marks a life of discipleship ... a life that is uncalculating ... that loves without thought of numbers on a ledger. It is a love that is extravagant in its unrelenting abundance.

At a time when church resources are becoming limited, how willing are we to show such an abundant, extravagant love? Do we act out of abundance or out of scarcity?

Do we share the grace that comes through the cross with seemingly reckless abandon? Or do we skittishly portion out our love because we feel overwhelmed by the challenges we face in our ministry or believe that we have done enough?

Do our words and actions fill the room with love so that fear ... pain ... and doubt are overwhelmed?

So, let's consider this: What does grace actually smell like?

For someone getting a meal at the shelter, it might be the smell of food. For someone recovering at the hospital, it might be something more antiseptic and for a child and a mother at the Welcome Centre, perhaps the smell of clean sheets recalls a safer and more secure time.

For Mary, would it be the nard ... a reminder of her personal relationship with God? Or would it be the scent of licorice or cloves ... a scent that could remind her of her brother's death and of new life that comes through Jesus' love?

Perhaps, there is a smell that reminds you of our life as a family of faith?

As you entered this morning, I applied a touch of something to your wrist. That something is nard ... it's amazing what you can get on Amazon.

At this time, I invite you to take a deep whiff of your wrist.

Imagine the sensation that breathing in the smell of a pound of this as it fills a small home ... of it washing over everyone and everything in the room.

Allow the scent to serve as a reminder of Mary's abundant and extravagant offering ... and of our call as disciples to love with equal abundance ... to love and minister with abandon.

Like Mary does in the story, allow the aroma of the perfume to be a scent of discipleship and new life. Let the fragrance become a reminder of our call to reorient our lives toward the cross and to carry others along the way.

The fragrance of love's actions is carried on the wind to places we may never see.

That is true of Trinity's ministry ... that we cannot see all the people whose lives have been touched by our actions or our words of welcome and of love. And we can be surprised by just how far a reach our ministry has in the world.

Somewhere down the road ... that wind may blow in a direction that washes over us, and ... in that moment we may catch a scent and recall times of grace ... and remember that such abundant love swaddles and anoints the lives of those we carry.

... that such unconditional love is the sweet smell of the gospel promise for all.

AMEN

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed 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; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever.

AMEN

Blessing

May God who has called us forth from the dust of the earth, and claimed us as children of the light, strengthen you on your journey into life renewed.

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favour and give you + peace.

AMEN