

# Discipleship 6

## 16/07/17 18:30 Evensong

Have you ever received an expensive or extravagant gift? I remember the occasion when a good friend of mine was greeted by her parents out of the blue with a set of car keys in their hand, and a new car waiting outside. "For me? A car"! The feeling of not deserving it, or of being loved so much.

But extravagant gifts might also provoke a suspicion of motives. Think of the large donation to a political party, trying perhaps to buy influence.

Extravagance with money towards us might also provoke in us the wrong feelings about money and its enticing power over us.

So a woman named Mary got hold of some expensive perfume, and lavished it over Jesus' feet. We can only speculate on why she did it, but certainly there were those around Jesus who thought that the perfume should have been sold and the money used for better purposes like feeding the poor. So, what do you think - should the perfume have been sold, or used as it was to anoint Jesus' feet?

In our 8 week sermon series on Discipleship, we are today thinking about how following Jesus calls us to put our faith into action. Mary couldn't help herself - in Jesus she had found acceptance and love. She had done many things that had got her into trouble in Jewish society, but by knowing Jesus her life was transformed. Lavishing him with an expensive gift of oil was her way of doing something in response. Her faith in him called her to do something for Jesus.

So for all of us that are baptised Christians - followers of Jesus Christ - are called similarly to a life of service of others. And a life recognising in ourselves and others the way we are already serving God. The teacher who works in their own time preparing a lesson that will only last an hour, before it is gone and forgotten. The choir who practice for weeks for an hours performance - and then it is gone!

A number of us here work in many ways in the community. Might we recognise that in doing so we are reflecting the love of God to those around us? And might God still be calling us to new ways in which to reflect our faith in him by what we do?

Tonight we come to the end of our term, and the last choral service before the summer. It is after a party tonight that our choir get a well earned rest until September. But a rest from choir ought not to mean a rest in our walk with God. The call to the disciple is outlined well in our first reading from Isaiah: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the things that weigh people down, to let the oppressed go free, to share our bread with hungry, and to look after the homeless. This is every disciple's calling. So over the summer recess choir, your calling is nothing less than finding other ways apart from singing to serve your Lord. To loosen the bonds of injustice on someone. To feed the hungry, or to relieve the load on someone. A high calling, but one that by God's Spirit we are all empowered to engage with.

What might that look like in reality. Perhaps, when we try to work out how to do this, it just seems too daunting as we look at all the problems around us? Maybe we have had great ideas at how the world could be different but they seem so overwhelming that we end up doing nothing? So a good place to start is where we are now: what one thing can I do this week to make the world a better place? Who can I encourage, where can I offer a helping hand, what letter could I write, who might be lonely and could do with a phone call or text? Or where could I work together with

others who already have a vision and need helpers? Who could I talk to who could point me towards something which needs doing, where I might be exactly the person they are looking for?

Our world has so many needs, and peoples lives can be transformed by the generosity of people towards one another. We have seen that in the terrible fire at Grenfell Tower. Might we all be encouraged in our discipleship of Jesus Christ to look beyond ourselves and our immediate family to generously and extravagantly look to serve those around us.