

John 12:1-8 Taking notice of our Lord while he is with us

I want you to do something unusual this morning, I want you to turn around and notice the person next to you. You don't have to say anything but just notice them, who they are, how they are sat. GO!

OK, well done, we have all just done something incredibly important, we have all just stopped and taken notice of who we have around us, which is something we don't get a lot of time to do normally. However, it is always important to notice those around us, to truly notice them and recognise them as a person. When we are noticed we feel valued and validated, we feel like we matter. When we notice people, we begin to see them as God sees us.

How many of us have drifted through a day without really seeing those around us? I suspect we all have, and very frequently. We are so fixated on what we think matters that we lose sight of what truly matters – the presence of God amongst us. Often, we don't pay attention to the passage of time. We miss the important people, and the important moments.

How many of us really take notice of what we have while we have it? Not many of us I would think, and that's the same for our faith as it is in the rest of life. This morning's gospel story tells the story of a woman who really made sure she took notice of what she had while she had it. Jesus arrives in Jerusalem along with his disciples and many other pilgrims preparing to celebrate Passover. Aware that the opposition to him is about to take a new course, Jesus retreats to a private place, as he sometimes did. This time he goes to the house of some friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. While he is there Mary takes a bottle of the most expensive perfume she had and she washes Jesus' feet with it, drying them with her hair as she does so. This was an extremely extravagant act, which completely defies all common sense, but in doing this she is loving and worshiping Jesus, thoroughly and unashamedly making the most of his presence with her.

This was shocking in three ways – firstly Mary and Jesus were not married or related and so it was frowned upon for her to touch him. Second of all she should have had her hair covered in public, as was the custom of the time. Finally, to undertake the role of a slave and wash Jesus' feet was something that no one who was not a slave would be expected to do. Yet she bears no mind to the stares or the whispers of disapproval. Mary serves as an example for us all here today. She is extravagant and reckless in her attention to Jesus, and she points the way for us as well. She doesn't care if her devotion raises eyebrows or draws the wrong kind of attention. There are many ways we can imitate Mary in our lives, in the way we take things a little slower, and build in time for Jesus in all we do. In the ways we come to church, and how we order our thoughts and offer our worship. One way could be as we come to the communion table let us take notice of Jesus with us. Whatever your beliefs the bread and wine will be, either literally or spiritual or purely as an image and a reminder, of the body and blood of Jesus. I invite you not to eat the wafer straight away, but to take second or two just to look at it, and to think of Jesus being here with us.

As we come up and go away from the table and into Christ's world let us continue our commitment to him and his presence with us. As we go through our weeks and our lives let us carry him in our hearts, recklessly and unashamedly paying attention to and celebrating his presence with us. And, as we do, we will notice how the fragrance of our worship fills the whole of our lives as the fragrance of Mary's perfume filled her house.

Amen.