



### Readings for the next two weeks

<b>Monday 10<sup>th</sup></b>	Reading Rom 2 Pray for Luis, Miriam Checa & family
Tuesday	Reading Rom 3 Pray for Heather Critchley
Wednesday	Reading Rom 4 Pray for Elouise Critchley Reading Rom 5 Pray for Colin Dunbar & family
Friday	Reading Rom 6 Pray for Bill & Sue Ellis
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Phil Evans and family
<b>Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August</b>	Reading Rom 7 Pray for Peter Evans & family
Monday	Reading Rom 8:1–17 Pray for Jon (Drew & Stephanie, Alex & Mark) Fisher
Tuesday	Reading Rom 8:18–39 Pray for Jamie, Maida, Jimson & Jewell Filoteo
Wednesday	Reading Rom 9:1–29 Pray for Sylvia Findlay
Thursday	Reading Rom 9:30–10:21 Pray for Karina Philips and family
Friday	Reading Rom 11:1–24 Pray for Jean & David Hall
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Lucy Frost
<b>Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	Reading Rom 11:25–12:21 Pray for Suzanne Gallier

### Prayer requests for the next two weeks:

- We pray for communities and individuals, families and those living on their own
- We remember Katie and Scott getting married on Sat 29<sup>th</sup>, those receiving medical treatment and in hospital, and for Rev Carl McCann preaching on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August.
- We pray for Jon F, John B, Chris H, Keith H, Chris C and others

A very warm welcome to our morning worship service. As you can see, this Update covers the next two weeks. We normally print a two-week *Update* throughout August. We will still deliver a *printed copy* of the Sunday Sermon for Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August to the twelve or so who receive them each week.

There are two ways to look at things; we can look at them from a macro or a micro level. Simply put, micro refers to small things and macro refers to big things. The astrophysicist uses a telescope to see better something that is big. The lab technician uses a microscope to see things that are so small that the human eye alone cannot see. It is amazing how we can get trapped in our perspective of things. We can accept the whole thing and yet never see the amazing finer detail and beauty of things around us in creation. Alternatively, one can get so caught up in the little, almost insignificant, things in life that revolve around 'me', and never see the wonderful bigger picture of life as a whole.

Can I say this; one of the Bible's strong points is to enable its readers to see *both* the Big picture of the whole of God's creation and plan of salvation in Christ, and to bless us in seeing the intricate beauty of things so small and seemingly insignificant that God took time to bring into being. The whole picture is a masterpiece and the detail will forever make us wonder and ask, 'How can this be?'

The macro is found in this: '*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*' (Gen 1: 1) and '*For God so loved the world...*' (John 3: 16). The micro is found in this: '*When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body...*' (Psalm 139: 16) and '*Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?*' (Matthew 6: 26). **Grace & Peace!**

### Prayer requests from Llay Nazarene Church:

- Jean, who is in hospital, and her husband Tony
  - Gemma and the family circle (her grandmother is in her last days; it is uncertain what will have happened between now and Sunday – please pray for them)
  - **Epic** - our holiday Bible club is going online this year, 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>.
- We'll still be having our post-service Zoom catch up, and everyone is welcome to join us The link is - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3505439166>

### Readings: Isaiah 52: 1-7; Mark 14: 1-10



**Message:** The phrase that Isaiah used is, to us, a foreign cultural expression; here it is, **'how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news...'**. If we let our imagination run riot for a while, we could begin to understand what it might mean. For an individual today, it may be the results of a recent scan with the words, *'you are now in remission...'* It is probably the longing of the entire world to hear that some hard-working and skilled scientists have a vaccine for COVID-19! On occasions, the news reminds us of tragedies around the world. Some have affected large numbers of people. Sometimes they are brought about by sheer evil and can be summed up in one word like *'Srebrenica'* (the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary remembered recently, where 8000 fell in ethnic cleansing); and that one word *'ISIS'* – which sends a chill down our spine!

There are also been natural disasters like droughts or famines, referred to down the ages as *"of biblical proportions"*. I used to wonder why when a really bad thing happens it is linked to the Bible! The present pandemic has made me think of that phrase - *'...of biblical proportions'*. I thought about the *seven years of famine* in the days of Joseph, the three years of drought during the ministry of Elijah; and let's not forget about *the ten plagues of Egypt*. All these brought whole nations under terrible onslaught for long periods. I was wondering if COVID-19 should be viewed in this way. I was pondering over the phrase, **"biblical proportions"** and how it is usually linked to national disasters.

We have had pandemic-like tragedies before; like the bubonic plague in Europe from the 14<sup>th</sup> century which wiped out half of Europe! We also had the plague in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England (the *Black Death* as it was called); and the Spanish flu (a century ago) which killed some fifty million people globally. It seems that these times of global tragedies are not yet at an end. What surprises me the most is that COVID-19 happened in our generation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in our very modern, technological world. It has stopped us in our tracks; it has well and truly got our attention - we are all ears! Perhaps like me, you can also recall some of those scenes on a television broadcast from the famine in Biafra in the late 1960s which I remember watching as a teenager and wondering then, *how can this be in our day and age?*

As a child of 11, I remember the TV pictures of the Aberfan disaster, where torrential rain caused a slag heap, in the heart of the South Wales coalfield, to engulf the local primary school in the village of Aberfan with the death of 144! In

writing this, the last thing I wanted to do was recall another disaster or spoil your day – as if we did not have enough bad news! The plus side of this, however, is that it also allows me to highlight **another kind of biblical proportion**, one that is generous, gracious, and full of mercy and abundant in goodness.

In short – **it is without equal!** I wanted to remind you of *how God in his grace and mercy came* to the rescue of whole nations. *He returned his people from exile* to their homeland in Judea. *He kept his promise to bless the whole world* through one man. God has sent healing upon us that reaches into our hearts and souls. The kind of proportions we have with Jesus Christ is a cup which is described as 'overflowing'; and that 'with goodness and mercy all the days of our life, and we will dwell in the House of the Lord forever'. There was a film many years ago with the title, *'The Good, the Bad and the ugly'*. If we were to make an honest film of the story I have in mind, it would have to be 'The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful!

### **1. What a Waste!**

There was one thing that drove this woman to do what she did, and *it wasn't utilitarianism either*; what she did that day solely, and unashamedly, said to Jesus – **'This is all for you!'** If she wanted to use it for *'the greater good'*, then she should have done what others had suggested. She should have sold it and given the money to help the poor. There are radio programmes which, following a God spot, asks for donations to help some worthy cause every week! Such a general concept was **not** even remotely in her mind. She deemed this item of great personal value worthy for one thing alone! It would last only a few moments; some saw it as a mad extravagance. It was such a moment that we talk about it still! It was without calculation! It was all or nothing. It was a Holy moment, but as usual – some complained bitterly!

It was a God-ordained encounter, inspired, touching, love-filled and so focused, she wasn't even aware of the angry eyes watching or poisoned tongues wagging. All she saw was her LORD. Her sacrifice caused her no hurt or regret... had she more, she would have given it. Here is the punch though; just as she gave up her most precious possession for one solitary *Person*, so Jesus gave up Himself – for **ALL** of us. There was no waste in her extravagant gift and certainly no waste in His either! Such acts of worship are never a waste! Secondly, an unforgettable quote from the Master,



## 2. It was a Beautiful Thing!

This is the quote verbatim; **‘Leave her alone,’ said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me” (Mark 14:6).** What she did for Jesus, was taken by Jesus Himself and couched this way; “I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.” (Mark 14:9)

And get this - the **beauty** of what this woman did **stood in juxtaposed contrast** to what happened next in verse 10, **‘Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them.’** **Have you ever ‘seen it’ in that light before?** When we see what Judas did, we must use the words on him, **‘What a Waste’!** He had **walked** with Jesus, **seen** his miracles, **heard** his words. There is a double whammy here: Firstly, his **waste** laid side by side with her **gift** draws attention to her. And secondly, her sacrifice for Jesus makes his sacrifice for the world **even more astounding!** **Her sacrifice** draws our attention to Christ’s incomparable sacrifice! The hymn-writer puts it like this: *‘In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine, a wondrous beauty I see, for ‘twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died, to pardon and sanctify me.’*

This act by a woman, in a society where men were predominant, was crucial given **the very moment** she did this – it the evening before Good Friday. Her acute spiritual timing is perfect, and her ability to highlight **‘first things first’** beckons us to stop and think hard. While not ignoring the plight of the poor, she was able to see **how everything else was subordinate** to the **glorious and imminent death of Jesus!** The real need of the hour was **not** the poor but the solitary Worship, Adoration and Anointing of the Lord Jesus. She was **proclaiming the priceless** treasure of the Good News to be discovered in the cross of Jesus – she had come to anoint him before his burial. In terms of foreign cultural meanings, as I mentioned before, it was Jesus’ sacrifice that **converted a demeaning symbol of death into a glorious symbol of life;** more than that – a curse was transformed into something of incredible beauty – **the Cross**. Today, we speak and sing of the Cross as a thing of glory, beauty, and wonder. **It didn’t use to be** - but Jesus made it so! That’s what this woman saw – that is why she gave all! We will mark this beauty now **by breaking bread together.**