



Unhindered Love

In former centuries if we wanted to communicate with others we would have written a letter. The letter would in some countries, such as the USA, been given to 'Pony Express' and they would have taken it by horse across the country. One of the most significant changes was the introduction of the telegraph and telephone. Now wires carried the message instantly across vast distances even oceans when cables were laid under them. When wireless arrived and in our century was allied to the telephone we have the wonderful mobile phone. Now we can speak to almost anyone anywhere in the world at any time. That includes the train from Liverpool Street, where you hear them at the top of their voice, telling the whole carriage that they are passing Stratford and will be arriving at Witham in 40 minutes. And if you are really unfortunate you get to hear their life history and then that of their family!

But maybe the greatest invention has been the Internet. Now we have vast amounts of information at our finger tips. Though it is often hard to find what you want. Now rather than write a letter we can send an email, which will travel almost instantly throughout virtually the whole of the world.

Yet in the midst of all this information and communication, people are actually communicating less with each other. Many parents are communicating even less with their children than they did before all these communication aids. There is an emptiness and loneliness in many people's lives. Though they very rarely know why it is there. Above all there is less communication with God, despite the age we live in.

This passage from John's Gospel may help us to see some of the answers to this situation.

Let us pray before we examine this interaction between Mary and Jesus.

The first thing we see is **Worship**. For Mary was worshipping Jesus. Just over a year ago most of the church studied the book, 'The Purpose Driven Life'. If I was a school teacher I would give you all a test and ask you what the 1st purpose was. For those who do remember it was effectively **to bring pleasure to God**¹. And Rick Warren says this is **worship**.

In many churches the band is called the worship band. And we usually introduce the time of singing during the service, by saying let's have a time of worship. That's not wrong but a very limited definition of worship. Some friends of ours, called Carol & Neil Cruickshank used to run a course entitled, 'Call to Worship'. One of things Neil said has stayed with me. For he said '**worship is a lifestyle**'. We worship God with the whole of our lives not just singing songs. Mary was worshipping Jesus as she anointed him. In one of the cross reference passages she is crying and washing his feet with her tears and drying them with her hair.²

¹ 'The Purpose Driven Life' by Rick Warren. Chapter 8, page 63

² Luke 7:36-50



So Mary is really worshiping Jesus and not just singing songs. [It says that the perfume filled the whole house.](#) What a picture of worship? When we do sing our songs, how often do we think about what we get out of it. When maybe we should think about what God is getting from our singing in terms of his pleasure. Can't you just hear him saying to his angels, look Meadgate are worshiping me in song again. Oh how I just love to hear it, for it brings me a great deal of pleasure.

But secondly we see that Mary was worshiping Jesus **E**nthusiastically. I could have used other words such as **passionately, exuberantly, with emotion or even costly.** But Mary was certainly worshiping in a very whole hearted way. Not very long ago we studied the 10 commandments. It is interesting when Jesus summed up the commandments he use the positive statement that we should do things rather than not do things. He said the first commandment was,

*'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'*³

One could almost as easily change this to one should worship the Lord with all of our hearts, all of our souls and all of our minds.

For one of the words for worship in the NT, *proskun*, means could be translated **'to lean forward and kiss'**⁴. So we could in a sense translate this as you shall worship the Lord with all your heart. We are certainly called to worship God enthusiastically. And it may be costly.

Most commentators say the jar of perfume was worth a years wages. I couldn't find an exact average statistical wage for this country. But from the few sites I did look at it appeared the average salary is around at least £20,000. So Mary poured £20,000 worth of perfume over Jesus feet. I am not sure I would go that far. I might give a £100 of after shave, but £20,000 is way over the top. But this is the example that Mary sets us, in worshipping Jesus enthusiastically.

Can I just for a moment speak specifically to us men. When we blokes get together say in a pub, or share in a group over coffee, what do we talk about. Usually men will talk about sport. Usually football or may be rugby. Or we may talk about our cars. Or we may even talk about our jobs. But very rarely will men share themselves. We don't very easily share our feelings with one another.

Men also in public will very rarely express their feelings. Well there is one exception to this. When we watch sport, particularly say football, even in the company of women and children, we may get very emotional. Lots of shouting, particularly when a goal is scored or if the referee needs some new glasses.

But get men in public, particularly in church or Christian meetings and we very rarely will express any outward emotion.

³ Matthew 22:37 & Deuteronomy 6:5 [NIV]

⁴ See Young's Analytical Concordance



However, this example of Mary, crying and anointing Jesus feet, shows us that true worship should involve all of our lives including our emotions. And there should be no exclusion for us men. True we still need to be blokes in our response to Jesus. But if Jesus could weep over Jerusalem and weep outside Lazarus grave then shouldn't we be able express our emotions before God.

But how is this possible, because I believe the third point in this story is **Love**. This title of this sermon is '**Unhindered Love**'. Mary was worshipping Jesus due to her Unhindered Love. In my imagination I see her kneeling at Jesus feet and looking up into his eyes. What does she see? In some accounts she is crying. I think she did sense that he was going to die. This passage in many translations has the heading, '**Jesus Anointed at Bethany**'. One of the reasons that you anointed people was for burial. Admittedly usually after they were dead. But I believe the main reason for Mary's tears and the reason she was worshipping Jesus was that at the centre of all this was love.

I think that in some way she sensed God's love shining out of this man. She could see in his eyes that great love that God has for his world and particularly for the people in it. But even more she sensed Jesus love for her Mary. It wasn't just in his eyes. Jesus had spent time at Bethany with Mary and Martha. He had raised Lazarus from the dead. They had seen his love expressed in this great act of compassion and probably in other small ways. She knew in her heart that he loved not just the world but her as a person. This love had, as God's love always can, healed her heart and started to set her free from anything that would hold her back.

So now having received God's love in her heart, she in turn is released to love God freely and completely. She can experience and express 'unhindered love' toward God. I know some may disagree with me, but I don't think we can really love God, until we ourselves have received God's love. This receiving and returning love is expressed in some of the songs we sing. I know it is a golden oldie but Graham Kendrick wrote the song, 'Lord you are so precious to me'. And I am sure some remember the first verse says:

**Lord, You are so precious to me,
And I love You,
Yes, I love You,
Because You first loved me.**

I am sure that for many of us that is our experience. Because he first loved us and we encountered that love, he has now become very precious to me. And isn't one aspect of worship, expressing his worth or how precious he is to us.

So let's consider the fourth and final point from this encounter. Quite often sermons have 3 points but I have a fourth. And it is this, '**Let God's love reach our hearts**'.

My view of the Bible is that it is God's word. It is full of wonderful truth. Indeed one can say it is 'God's love letter to us his children'. But sometimes I may read the words it contains or



even hear them read. And that is almost all it is. For these words 'rattle round my brain'. They are good words and they help to inform and educate my mind.

Again I often hear wonderful sermons or talks. And almost all the sermons here at Meadgate are excellent. Mones has preached some cracking good sermons. But again these can just be words that impact on my mind.

I may hear prophetic words or wonderful prayers that these again can just be words.

But when these words under the assistance of the Spirit reach my heart, then they start to have an impact. God's words of love that reach and touch my heart have the capacity to transform me. It his love that melts my hard heart. His words of love that heal the broken areas in my life. His words of love and truth, that when they reach my heart, will set me free. After all Jesus said,

*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*⁵

And again he said:

*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*⁶

But if these are just words in a book or heard, and do not reach our hearts they may not make much difference. But when with God's wonderful and redeeming love, they touch our hearts it can be as one of the hymns says, '**Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven**'⁷

You may have noticed that the four points spell out the word:

Well

You may wonder what on earth is the purpose of that. Well I have a CD by the Christian song writer and worship leader Brian Doerkson, called '**You Shine**'. On there is a song called, '**It is well**'. It is actually a hymn written in 1873 when the author when through a very traumatic time. The chorus in it's fullness says, '**It is well with my soul**'

So if we think about this as question to all of us in the light of this passage we could as the question:

'Is it well with my soul'

So we all could ask ourselves the question is it well with our soul this morning. Has God's love impacted our lives and reached our hearts. Have we been healed and transformed by his love so that we are free to worship him. Not just in brief moments in church when we sing some songs, but do we worship him with the whole of our lives. Is our worship of God, enthusiastic? Is it passionate and costly?

⁵ John 8:32 (NIV)

⁶ John 8:36 (NIV)

⁷ Praise my soul the king of heaven – H.J. Lyte



One of the wonderful things here at Meadgate is that after the sermon there is an opportunity to come forward for prayer. Those who have prayed before the service usually bring any words or pictures that the Lord has given them may impact us. So if the Lord's love touches you, why not come forward for prayer. The Lord's love can touch your heart where ever you are, even at home or just sitting in your seat here today. But it often becomes really effective when we take a step such as coming forward to the front for prayer. It is not always easy or comfortable. I know because I personally really don't like coming forward in services or Christian meetings for prayer. But I have found that when I have, it has been in those times that God's healing love has reached my heart and begun to transform my life.