

We don't know what Jesus said to the woman, if anything, but he clearly thought very highly of her action for he says, 'She has done a beautiful thing to me'.

- ❖ Why do you think Jesus was so moved by her action? Or, put another way, what did she give him?
- ❖ Is a gift still a gift if we are asked to give it, or does it become something else? (eg obligation / duty) Does it matter?
- ❖ Have you ever felt like doing (or actually done) something seemingly irrational or spontaneous or extravagant in response to God? If so, how did it make you feel?
- ❖ Bearing in mind how the disciples responded to the woman's actions, in your response to Jesus does it matter to you what others think?
- ❖ Does anything else strike you about this story?

A song we often sing picks up the imagery of Luke 15

**Earth and heaven worship You,
Love eternal, faithful and true,
Who bought the nations, ransomed souls,
Brought this sinner near to Your throne;
All within me cries out in praise.**

*Your majesty, I can but bow.
I lay my all before You now.
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your majesty.*

What does it mean to you to know that you are dressed "in royal robes? What shape does your "I live to serve" take at the moment?

Time to think and pray things over:

Take time to thank God for his grace and mercy towards you. Pray too for the coming weeks when we think about how we can respond to God's grace.

Resourcing God's Mission

Week 1



**Our vision is to be an inviting community,
welcoming people to know Jesus Christ,
equipping them to live and serve, and sending
them to proclaim His love.**

Verse for the Week:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. *(2 Corinthians 8:9)*

An Opening Prayer:

This is love, not that we loved God,
but that he loved us and sent his Son.
He is the sacrifice for our sins,
that we might live through him.
If God loves us so much
we ought to love one another.
If we love one another
God lives in us.

As we look to the generosity of the cross, we are aware that we have not lived up to God's generosity: too often we have lived out our poverty rather than God's riches.

**We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly, love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.**

Time to think things over:

Think back over birthdays and Christmases – what is the best gift you have been given. What made it so good – was it surprise, uniqueness, value or something else?

We often talk at Christmas time about Jesus being the perfect gift. What does this actually mean though? Take time to think this one through and the different ways in which Jesus is a perfect gift for you.

BIBLE STUDY - READ LUKE 15: 11 - 32

We're going to focus on the end of the story, and particularly on the actions of the father. In v20, we see that the father is looking for the son, eagerly anticipating him to return.

- ❖ In what ways do you find this a comforting picture of God as Father?
- ❖ Is it your experience of God, that He is the Father who comes looking?

In verse 22 the Father dresses the son in robes, with sandals and a ring on his finger. They speak of the worth, status and comfort that the Father bestows on the son, despite the son's insistence that he returns without status or worth.

- ❖ Do you think it is fair what the father is doing?
- ❖ Thinking about this for ourselves, how can we know what we are worth to our heavenly father?
- ❖ Do we see ourselves the way the Father sees us?
- ❖ What status do we have as Christians? What does this enable us to do?

This story that Jesus tells helps us to reflect not only on a God of grace and mercy, but on what kind of response is right. We are familiar with the older brother's reaction, but to help us see a different reaction to the God of grace, we're going to read an event in Matthew's Gospel. Read: Matthew 26:1-13

Jesus is headed for Jerusalem. He knows what awaits him (v1). Consider the contrasting reactions to Jesus - first from the religious leaders (v3-5), then an unnamed woman (v6-13). Why do you think Jesus stirred such deep emotions and reactions in people?

- ❖ How would you describe the woman's actions? (eg extravagant, generous, wasteful, embarrassing, over the top, strange, amazing...).
- ❖ If you'd been there, how might you have reacted?