

**Bible Study**  
**Fifth Sunday in Lent, Year C**  
**March 20, 2016**

**[RCL] Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8; Psalm 126**

**Isaiah 43:16-21**

The writer of this portion of Isaiah calls us to lift our vision far beyond our self-imposed limits to God's care for us. Yes, there are the chariots and horses of military might. Yes, there have been hard times in our collective and individual journeys with God. But God is greater than all these things and there will be a time when everything will be made new and put right. We are invited to live into hope as we see the greatness of the God who is more powerful than all that we face.

- How would your life look different if you trusted that the God, who created all things, was for you and with you no matter what your circumstances may be?
- Can you think of a place in your life where God may be inviting you to restore your hope in God?

**Psalm 126**

There was a time when God's people had been brought back from exile and Zion was being rebuilt. It was a time of rejoicing and laughter. The good news of how God had saved God's people spread among the nations. The psalmist, recounting how God had acted in the past, has built up their faith to ask God to act in the present. We need our memories of God's salvation in the journey of faith. Remembering how God has reached into our lives with living water in the past will enable us to persevere when we find ourselves in difficult and dry places in our journey with God and God's people.

- Can you recall a time in your journey with God when you felt like one of "those who dream," when you were overjoyed with how God had brought healing and rescue in your life?
- How might your faith be enriched if you were to periodically remember the moments in which you have rejoiced in God's love for you?

**Philippians 3:4b-14**

These words of Paul show a man consumed with a singular vision for his life. Here Paul sums up the impulse that shapes the contour of his life: to know Jesus Christ. For Paul, everything pales in comparison to the "surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus." We hear this passage in the fifth week of our journey through Lent, a time where we seek to create more space in our lives to enter more deeply into our union with Christ. As we celebrate the love and life of God today, it is a gift to reflect on Paul's passionate words.

- Do you know Jesus Christ in such a way that everything else in my life becomes secondary to knowing him?
- How might pressing on towards knowing Christ change your life?

**John 12:1-8**

Something that has always struck me about this story is not only the extravagance of Mary's worship of Jesus, but the lingering effect of her extravagant and intimate worship. I wonder what it was like for Mary to walk through her village with her nard-soaked hair for the days

after her anointing of Jesus. I'm sure that everyone who was near her smelled the sweet fragrance. I think of how our worship of Jesus changes and marks us in this world. We, too, are invited to be like Mary, whose worship of Jesus created an inviting fragrance for those around her. The more we see Christ, the more we want to offer our worship, and the more we are changed from having done so.

- Can you identify anything in your life that may have caused you to lose sight of the worthiness of Christ to receive your worship?
- What about Christ have you taken for granted?
- How might intentional reflection invite your worship and change you in the process?

*Written by Jamie Osborne*

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