

the challenge of new things

a sermon preached on the

fourth sunday after pentecost

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at

st john's

ANGLICAN CHURCH CAMBERWELL

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the lections: 2 Samuel 11: 26 – 12: 10, 13-15; psalm 32; Galatians 2:15-21; Luke 7: 36-8:3

In the service this morning, we will have a baptism. Austin who is six months old will be baptised. By looking at baby Austin, I remember twenty years ago when my son was born.

Raising children was not easy. It's challenging for both parents. With no training beforehand, suddenly we have to look after this precious gift; a baby.

Then the baby grows quickly and before we know it, the baby becomes a small person. Then he goes to kindergarten, Primary School, High School and then University.

It is challenging to raise a child because it involves many new things. A young child becomes a teenager. A teenager becomes a young adult. As parents, we need to learn how to deal a new situation every time.

Dealing with a baby like Austin, will be different when Austin becomes a teenager. We face a new thing every time. It is challenging.

For us as adults, similar things happen. Throughout our life, we work then perhaps we meet someone along the way. Then we will perhaps get married, then work and work and work. Then what. We are retired. Every time our life situation has changed. It is challenging.

When we are ready to retire and are no longer working full time, it sounds wonderful. But it is challenging, because we are dealing with new things.

When we work, we get up early and go to work. But when we retire, we are no longer doing the same routine again. As a result, we might get bored because of it. We face a new thing. It's a new challenge.

We are at home almost 24/7. Seeing our other half, husband or wife or our partner almost every hour, every minute, can create a new challenge. Being retired, we are facing something new. It is challenging.

Going back to the Gospel of Saint Luke chapter seven. I read this Gospel a few times. I visualise it. I imagine it.

Just imagine this scenario. A woman with long hair comes forward to the front of the Church. Sits on the floor, next to Father David, where he is sitting right now. And then the Gospel sounds like this. A woman comes forward to the front of the Church during the service. She stood behind Father David at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing Father David's feet and anointing them with perfume.

Just by imagining it – it sounds odd, doesn't it? But just be with me for moment.

Just imagine if that happened right now. You probably won't look at me anymore. Your attention will be at this woman.

The scene of Father David and the woman would probably be confronting and challenging.

Perhaps we may become concerned, or maybe worried. We worry about what would happen if someone takes a picture and uploads it to the internet. Uploads it to 'Instagram'. The whole world might see it. We worry and are concerned, because it is new and has never been seen before. It is out of the ordinary. It is not of the norm. It is challenging.

In this Gospel of Saint Luke, the story focuses on this woman. The centre of the story is this woman. Saint Luke didn't mention her name. St Luke didn't mention where she came from. He just mentioned that she is a sinner.

The woman is the centre of this story. She had the intention of coming to Jesus. She was calculated when she came to Jesus. It is a new thing for her. But she was prepared. She had a plan. She brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She brought perfume.

Without invitation from the owner of the house, she just came to Jesus and sat next to him. She didn't ask permission and didn't even speak a single word throughout the episode. Her actions spoke a thousand words.

She knew what she was going to do and she just went for it. She could have been rejected by the house's owner. She could have been rejected by Jesus, but she just wanted to do it. She had determination, no matter the outcome.

She has the guts, she has strong courage. She has desire. She has strong will, regardless of what people say. Regardless whether other women like her or not.

She just went for it. She cried. She kissed Jesus' feet. Dried his feet with her hair. She not only gave the perfume, but most of all, she gave herself.

She gave everything. She gave herself totally. That's what she could do. Then what? She waits. While Jesus is explaining to Simon. While Jesus talks. This woman just waits. While waiting, she didn't go anywhere, but was only there with Jesus, until Jesus said to her: 'Your sins are forgiven'.

We face a new thing in our lives, almost every day. It can be challenging facing a new thing, but this woman, despite her past just went for it. She planned and calculated when the right time was to come to Jesus.

She was prepared and gave offering but most of all she gave herself. She took the risk of being rejected and was totally committed. Totally dedicated. That what she could do. Her job was done. And Jesus did the rest.

Like this woman in this story, ministry is about the partnership between us and the Lord. Ministry can be challenging, especially with a new thing.

When we face a challenging task, we could do two things. One, do nothing, which is perhaps the easy way out, or two, do something about it. We prepare, we give our sweat and tears. But most of all, we give ourselves. We give our prayers. And then we wait and wait and wait. Then the Lord will do the rest.

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