Breaking Bread 10

Hello everyone,

           The passage from this week’s readings is John 12: 1-8, the story of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, anointing Jesus’ feet with expensive perfume and then wiping his feet with her hair. There’s a real sensory element to this story because John comments that “the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”
           So, this time, instead of breaking open the bread, we rather have the breaking open of the perfume so that the fragrance is let loose. Mind you, l don’t think you can beat the smell of baking bread, but whichever you prefer, bread or perfume, you get the idea of the fragrance filling the air all around.
            Mary doesn’t hold anything back here. Her action is extravagant in the extreme and she offers it without any thought of counting the cost, either financially or to herself and her reputation. All that matters is her devotion to Jesus. It’s not just the fragrance of the perfume, but the fragrance of her act of worship and devotion, which Jesus receives and welcomes with gratitude.
             This is a challenge for us, in the way that we offer our worship. Are we willing to be broken open in ourselves to fill the air with the fragrance of our worship and devotion, whether that be of the expensive perfume type or perhaps the more down to earth baking bread type?
               Whichever, we can be sure that Jesus will receive our offering with true gladness.

                 One last thing. As we draw nearer to Holy Week and the glorious celebration of Easter, we see that Mary’s action is prophetic too in that it points forward to Jesus being anointed for his burial. In John 19: 39-40, we are told that Jesus’ body was bound in linen cloths with about 100 pounds of aromatic spices. That’s really huge. Just imagine the fragrance of the risen Jesus as he re-emerges from the tomb, ready to fill the air of the whole world with his living presence. That really is a reason for us to offer generous, extravagant, fragrant worship to him, through the last days of Lent, into Holy Week and then to the climactic moment of Easter itself.

                   God bless,
                         Graham

 *Produced by Graham Wassell on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*