

“Do You Not Perceive It?” – God’s New Thing Among Us

Based on Isaiah 43:16–21 & John 12:1–8

- **Opening reflection on change:**
Invites the congregation to reflect on their relationship with change — whether we welcome it or resist it often depends on our comfort with the present.
- **Context of Isaiah 43:**
God's people are exiled in Babylon, longing for change. Isaiah offers a message of hope and encouragement rather than judgment.
- **Remembering God's past faithfulness:**
Isaiah reminds the people of God's past deliverance from Egypt — the parting of the Red Sea — but then says, “Do not remember the former things.” This paradox is explored: we remember God's faithfulness not to dwell in the past but to have hope for the future.
- **God is doing a new thing:**
A call to attentiveness — “Do you not perceive it?”
We must not miss what God is doing now by clinging too tightly to how things have always been.
- **This applies personally and communally:**
Our lives, and the life of Beverley Minster, are “His Story” — a story of God's ongoing grace. There is a sense of the Holy Spirit doing something new in this place, and everyone has a role in it.
- **Mary's anointing of Jesus (John 12):**
Mary recognises the moment and responds with extravagant generosity. Her gift is prophetic, timely, and deeply personal.
She models attentive discipleship — staying close enough to Jesus to understand what he is doing.
- **Contrast with Judas:**
Judas reacts with criticism and hardness of heart, missing the significance of the moment. His judgment of Mary reveals a spiritual blindness and ultimately contributes to his betrayal.
- **Martha's service also valued:**
Martha, often overlooked, is faithfully serving in her way — a reminder that we each offer different gifts.
- **Closing invitation:**
As Lent progresses, the congregation is encouraged to reflect in silence:
What new thing is the Holy Spirit doing? What is our response? Are we ready to be part of it?

Questions:

1. **Isaiah 43 reminds us of God's mighty acts in the past but also tells us not to "remember the former things."**
– *How can we balance remembering God's faithfulness in the past with being open to the "new thing" God is doing today?*
2. **"Do you not perceive it?" Isaiah asks.**
– *What helps or hinders us from perceiving the new things God may be doing in our lives or in our community right now?*
3. **Mary's act of anointing Jesus was generous, spontaneous, and deeply personal.**
– *What might it look like for us to show such devotion to Jesus in our own context today?*
4. **Judas criticised Mary's act, seeing it as wasteful.**
– *How do we sometimes judge others' expressions of faith, and what might that reveal about our own hearts?*
5. **The sermon spoke about different gifts — hospitality, time, service, finances.**
– *What gift has God given you, and how might He be inviting you to use it in this season?*
6. **"Can you not sense that the Holy Spirit is doing something new in this place?"** – *Do you sense God is doing something new in your church or life right now? What might your response be?*