



Sunday, 22 July 2018 – Feast of Mary Magdalene
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Readings: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17, Gospel St John 20:1-2, 11-18
Focusing on giving and receiving
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

I'm going to start my sermon by flattering you shamelessly! Having been here at St Andrew's for a couple of years, I've learned that you're all highly intelligent people. All true, I'm just not usually so effusive. You'll doubtless, therefore, have total recall of my sermon on Easter Sunday 2017. No? Ok, let me refresh your memory. Which woman featured in that sermon, today's Feast Day is the gigantic clue. The light dawns! Just as we heard in the Gospel the light dawned for Mary Magdalene after she had gone to Jesus' tomb while it was still dark. When she saw Jesus in his risen body and he called her by name, the light of the world had returned and everything that he had promised before his crucifixion had come true.

To give context, I repeat from my Easter sermon that Mary Magdalene is known to us only by the town 'Magdala' from whence she came. In her culture, she appears to lack the means of social status having no father, husband or son. Effectively, she's a social nobody' but as so often with Jesus, he disregards convention. At his resurrection he appears first to Mary, the apparent 'nobody', called her by name and transformed her into somebody, just as Jesus calls everybody personally to become somebody in his service.

What else do we know about her? Collectively, from the Gospels, we learn that she was cured by Jesus of seven demons. We don't know whether this was a paranormal condition or a mental health issue but whatever the cause, she was healed and never ceased to be thankful to Jesus for his saving grace.

The Gospels also inform that she gave of her means to provide for Jesus, his disciples and their mission and ministry, indicating that Mary was a woman of some substance. But it's what she did with her money that's important. She did not hesitate to give financial support to further Jesus' work in the community, in heartfelt thanks for the wealth of his grace that he had lavished on her, as he lavishes grace on us all.

Returning to where I started, as I've been here for a couple of years, you've likely noted that I'm not shy. This morning we have a gritty topic to tackle and that's money. The Bible urges giving money to further God's mission so, I've concluded it's alright to talk about money from the pulpit. I'm in the accommodating position of mentioning money because unlike the stipendiary clergy I don't receive a stipend for the ministry I undertake, I'm what's known as a self-supporting minister.

What you may not know about me is that I attended Kingwood, the English Methodist Boarding School founded by John Wesley. At school I remember learning about his

giving ethos. When lecturing at Oxford University in the 1700s his starting salary was £30 per year, his expenses £28, the £2 surplus he gave to good causes. The following year his salary doubled and, similarly, the next. He did not, however, increase his living expenses but he continued to increase his giving. Many, including me, have benefitted from John Wesley's generosity. Granted he didn't have a mortgage or have to pay income tax, social security or pension contributions. Irrespective I would like to say that in my working life I'd matched his example, but I didn't.

Having retired recently from the 'day job' reality means that my income has halved not doubled. Retirement has given me time to reflect and it seems right to me, who has benefitted so much from God's grace that I do not halve my giving and I must continue to reflect carefully what more I might do. Well, that's my story.

Now, getting down to brass tacks, Richard Shirley our Church Treasurer gave an excellent presentation on our Church finances at the AGM earlier this year and he continues to update the Church Executive Committee and Church Advisory Committee on the current financial position. Our church has obligations to meet annually, a substantial proportion of which goes to fund the stipendiary ministry and pension. Stipendiary clergy have given up the right to more lucrative employment in order to serve God in ministry and so, deserving of our support. Just in case you're wondering, neither Richard or the Rector had any notice that I would be preaching on this today.

Here's the rub: church life should not be fund-raising focused but rather mission-outreach focused but that needs a viable financial base from which to grow. The Church Fair was a marvellous contributor in every dimension but more is needed, much more, if the ministry and mission at this church is not only to be sustained but also developed.

On this Feast Day of Mary Magdalene, may we all reflect prayerfully on her generosity and part in Christ's mission and compare her example with our own. For, as St Paul in the Epistle says:

“Christ died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.”

Amen.