

**Apart but Together Worship**

**Hornsea URC – 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021 – Lent in plain sight : Oil.**

**Good morning and welcome to our Apart but Together Worship here at Hornsea United Reformed Church.**

**As we gather to share in this time together, let's begin with prayer.**

Father God, we come before you in the precious name of Jesus and we ask that we might know the presence of your Holy Spirit in our lives, moving within us and amongst us right now.

We come to bring to you our worship and praise because you are the Creator of the universe, the sustainer of life, and the Redeemer of humankind.

As we gather in worship, we ask you to speak to us through Your Word, and to clear the way for each of us to discover within ourselves the fulness of your power and all of your wondrous blessing.

Help us Father God to respond to your vast love and provision, so that we might bless your name and be a vessel through which you may shine in order to bring blessing and joy to others in the world.

So work in us we pray by the power of your Holy Spirit, that we might be everlasting citizens of your Kingdom both in heaven and on earth. Amen.

**We share together in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray:**

**The Lord's prayer.**

Our Father who art in Heaven,

Hallowed be thy name;

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass against us;

And lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,

Forever and ever. Amen.

**HYMN : We share together in the song Day of favour by David Fellingham: [Day of favour - YouTube](#)**

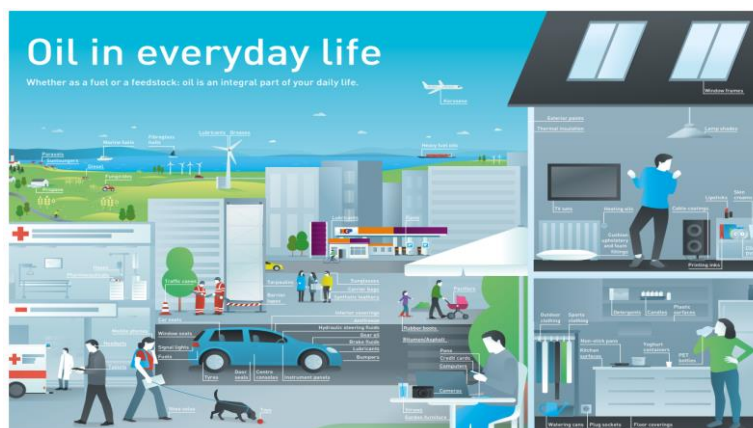


This morning we come to our number 6 service in our Lenten series based on the devotional book ‘Lent in plain sight’ that looks at ten objects, common in our life and in the life of Jesus.

So far we have considered Dust in week 1, Bread in week 2, the Cross in week 3, Coins in week 4, Shoes in week 5, and today we will be thinking about oil.

I don’t know if you’ve ever given much thought to oil, to be honest I hadn’t until I was given it as the focus for today.

Thanks to the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers, here we have an infographic illustrating 72 different ways in which oil is used today.



For many of us I’m guessing that one of our first thoughts about oil usage is that it is needed for running our motor vehicles, and although most of us haven’t travelled very far over the last year due to COVID-19 and the national lockdowns, we also know that oil is used to make high-speed land, sea, and air transportation possible



Within construction, which is one the few industries that has been allowed to continue during 3 national lockdowns since March 2020, oil is used to provide safety such as in hard hats, safety goggles, protective coatings and waterproofing.



Over the past year, many of us have been required for the greater part to stay in our homes and not go out. Although you may not have given it much thought whilst shut in, within our homes we are surrounded by products containing oil including cooking tools, domestic appliances, and cleaning products. Most of our furniture has some components developed from oil. This is true for any synthetic furniture, as well as furniture containing an oil finish.



Most of the electronics, from TVs to computers and mobile phones as well as many of the toys that children play with are made from oil-based plastics. These include Lego, dolls, frisbees, crayons, markers, and balloons. Other childhood items include car seats and pushchairs. Oil can also be found in many types of sporting equipment, such as surfboards, basketballs, and skate wheels, to name but a few.



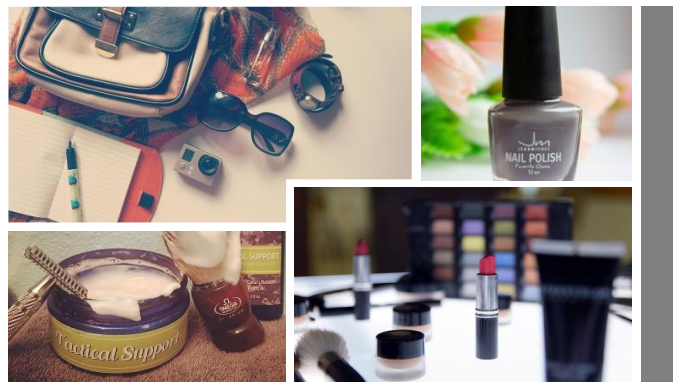
Oil is also used in clothing such as nylon, polyester, acrylic, and apparently spandex which can help us to look nice and trim which might come in handy if like me you've been on a lockdown diet and gotten a bit wider around the middle, which brings me nicely to oils that enable us to cook our foods, and heat or cool our homes.



I don't know where we would be without the NHS and medical care so many have needed over this past year, but did you realise that a great deal of medical equipment used today, many of which are life-saving devices, is made from oil. Not only heart valves and artificial limbs, but also medicines along with the cleaning and safety products medical personnel use.



There are also products that we use on an everyday basis to remain clean and healthy such as soap, shampoo, shower gel, toothbrushes all of which are made from oil, and with the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions we see many people beginning to venture out once more with their oil-based accessories such as perfumes, some make-up, hair colourings and nail varnish as well as bags, sunglasses, and jewellery, all deriving from oil.



Over this past year, with schools closing and people movement being restricted I feel like I've hardly seen anyone, and so as the country began to get back on it's feet again earlier this month with the roll out of COVID-vaccines and lockdown easing it was nice to see our local farmer, Dan, out in his crop sprayer with his various fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides that he uses to protect his crops from invasive plants or insects, spraying his fields that our home backs out onto and of course many of the products farmers use contain oil in one form or another to ensure that their agriculture business and their livelihood runs as smoothly as it can.



Well, that's us today.

If we look back over Biblical times through the Old and New Testaments in the Bible you will find that oil is mentioned over 200 times beginning in the first book of Genesis 28:18 when Jacob poured some oil on top of a pillar and then right the way through to Babylon's fall in last book of Revelation 18:13. Just like today, oil was used in a number of different ways for a number of different reasons, a few of which we are going to explore.



**HYMN :** But before we do, let's sing together an old favourite for many from Primary School through to Retirement Homes, [Sing Hosanna! Norman St Primary School & St Cuthbert's, Carlisle - YouTube](#)

**Our first Bible Reading comes from: Zechariah 4:1-6 which is entitled 'The gold lampstand and the two olive trees'**

**Zechariah 4:1-6.** Then the angel who talked with me returned and woke me up, like someone awakened from sleep. <sup>2</sup> He asked me, 'What do you see?'

I answered, 'I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it, with seven channels to the lamps. <sup>3</sup> Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.'

<sup>4</sup> I asked the angel who talked with me, 'What are these, my lord?'

<sup>5</sup> He answered, 'Do you not know what these are?'

'No, my lord,' I replied.



<sup>6</sup>So he said to me, 'This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty.

**Our second Bible Reading comes from Matthew 25:1-4 which is entitled 'The Parable of the Ten Young Women'**

**Matthew 25:1-4.** At that time the Kingdom of heaven will be like this. Once there were ten young women who took their oil lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and the other five were wise. <sup>3</sup> The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any extra oil with them, <sup>4</sup> while the wise ones took containers full of oil for their lamps.

**In these scripture readings we see how oil was used for light.**

In Zechariah 4, we see how the bowl on top of the golden lampstand was used for the storage of the oil. The pipes then carried the oil to each of the seven lamps so that they could be lit, with the burning oil providing light. Similarly, when the oil of the Holy Spirit is in the 'bowl of our souls' there is substantial energy for light. Where the oil is absent, a person's lamp is dark.



In Matthew 25 Jesus told the story of the ten young women who went out to meet the bridegroom. They were very much alike. All were young. All were on a proper mission. All were present, dressed, and on time, sounds a bit like the old TV programme Blind Date, or the newer one called 'Love Island' doesn't it, although I have to say I've never watched that one, I just hear about it from the kids at school! The only difference between the young women in Jesus's story was that five of them were foolish because they took their lamps but they didn't take any extra oil. When their lamps began to fail they said to the five wise women, "Give us some of your oil because our lamps have gone out!"



It was as simple as that: no oil, no light. Their cry may well describe the difficulty of many today: "Our lamps are going out!" We are in respectable places, following commendable schedules, and doing proper things, but "our lamps are going out." We fret and fuss, we blame others, we push panic buttons, but "our lamps are going out."

So here's a question we might want to think about. Will the lamp of any Christian go out due to the lack of oil? The answer should be no!

We should not forget what it says in Zechariah 4:3: “There are two olive trees by it (the lampstand), one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.” The living olive trees provided endless olives from which the oil came. There is no need for the bowl to run dry as long as the olive trees live and bear fruit.



Likewise, there is no need for Christians in whom the Holy Spirit resides to ever cry, “Our lamps are going out.” Jesus, who the Bible tells us was full of the Holy Spirit reminds us, “Let your light so shine before men” and it’s only by the oil of the Holy Spirit that our lamps can keep burning.

**We now turn to the Bible again, and the next reading comes from Exodus 30:22-31 which is entitled ‘Anointing oil’**

<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>23</sup> ‘Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant calamus, <sup>24</sup> 500 shekels of cassia – all according to the sanctuary shekel – and a hin of olive oil. <sup>25</sup> Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil. <sup>26</sup> Then use it to anoint the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law, <sup>27</sup> the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, <sup>28</sup> the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. <sup>29</sup> You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy. <sup>30</sup> ‘Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. <sup>31</sup> Say to the Israelites, “This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come.

**HYMN : Before giving thought to this, we are going to sing again: [The Lord's My Shepherd - Stuart Townend - YouTube](#)**

**In our scripture reading from Exodus 30 and verse 30 we see oil being used in consecration for service in Aaron and his sons.**



As we continue to explore scripture we find that the Bible speaks about anointing more than 150 times. Priests were anointed for service, and kings were anointed for leadership. The Psalmist also speaks about anointing the head with oil in the Psalm we have just sung.

At various points throughout the Bible we see anointing as a symbol of dedication, consecration, or to use a good old fashioned word that we don’t hear much about today, sanctification which literally means “to be set apart for holy use.” The anointing with oil upon a person was the very signature of God himself.

When we pick up the story of Aaron and his son's later on in Leviticus chapter 10:2 we see that two of Aaron's sons "offered unauthorised fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died."

In verse 7, Moses spoke to Aaron's two remaining sons and he says to them "Do not leave the entrance to the tent of meeting or you will die, because the Lord's anointing oil is on you.' So they did as Moses said."

Their action was determined by their being anointed with oil. Such is the case with all the priests of God, all Christians. 1 Peter 2:9 tells us "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." We are to obey, because of Divine oil and we are to act in the light of our anointing.

All through the Bible we see that anointing with oil means a license to practice, readiness for ministry, God's validation of his commission to people. We need to wait for the anointing of the Holy Spirit before we go into action.

Jesus instructed his disciples to do this too in Acts 1:4 when he said to them "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about." The God given oil upon us precedes obedience within us. We are never ready to serve until we are anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit, but we can always serve when the God's Holy Spirit has anointed us with His Holy oil setting us apart for His service.



**HYMN :** Before we consider our final scripture passage, let's listen to, meditate upon or join in the song by Julie Meyer, [Let Your Oil Flow - YouTube](#)

**And so our final Bible reading which shows oil being used in healing comes from James 5:13-16 which is entitled 'The prayer of faith'**

<sup>13</sup>Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you ill? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.



Throughout the New Testament, oil was used as an agent of healing. It was not to be the gimmick of the fake healers. It had a practical medicinal value, the same as it does today. It was a common practice to massage with oil, the same as it is today. Oil was also used for cleaning and sealing out foreign substances, once again, just like today



Jesus referred to it in a parable of his that we find in Luke chapter 10 in the story of 'The Good Samaritan.' Whether or not you are familiar with the story, there is a lot we can learn from it. In it, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers, and when the Good Samaritan came where the man was, he saw him, took pity on him, and in verse 34 of Luke 10 we read "He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. So here is a very clear example of oil and other elements being used in the process of healing.



Now I don't want us to be under any illusion this morning in that if we are filled with the Spirit of God we will all be healed of all our ailments, illnesses, diseases, conditions. That doesn't always happen in the physical sense, even though it's what we might hope and pray for. We only need look at the devastating effect that COVID-19 has had on so many within our world, and within our personal world to understand and accept that.

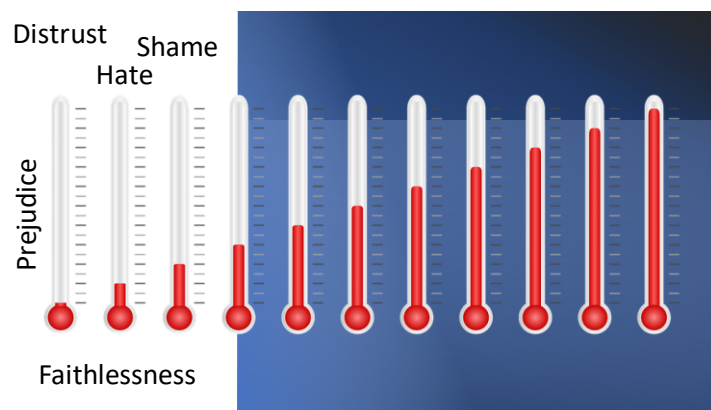


It was the Englishman, Dr. Frederick Edward Marsh who lived between 1858 to 1931, and devoted his life to studying the Bible and unfolding its treasures to others through preaching, commentaries and his many other books and outlines who said, “The Lord can heal, He has healed, He may heal, He does heal, and He may not heal.”



It is not for us to insist that God brings healing in the ways and by the means that we prescribe or decide. We must not affirm God’s power to heal and at the same time deny his right to use whatever means he chooses for that healing or healing process to take place. Our spirits are sometimes wounded and bruised. In that beautiful song brought to us by Julie Meyer she penned the words “Washing away shame and bitter memories - Just as a river flows into the sea, oil flow into me.”

Anyone of us can bear not just physical sickness, but also open sores of distrust, prejudice, hate or shame. Anyone of us at any time could be struck down with the ‘fever of faithlessness’ and so each one of us could greatly need anointing with the healing oil of the Holy Spirit on our troubled bodies and souls, bringing us life and light at our time of darkness, which brings us right back full circle to our starting point today.



When the oil of the Holy Spirit is in the ‘bowl of our souls’ there is considerable energy for light. Where the oil is absent, a person’s lamp is dark.



Father God, we don't want to be foolish, we don't want your oil to burn out, we want to be alive and on fire so that we might testify of you and be a witness of Jesus Christ. Let your fresh oil flow down over us, and in us and through us as we seek to serve you, being healed from all that is past physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. We make our prayer, our plea, in the precious name of Jesus in and through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.



We listen to and meditate upon the words of the song 'Fresh oil' and as we do so, I invite us to make this our prayer, our plea just now.

**HYMN :** [Fresh Oil | Yahweh Official Lyric Video | New Wine - YouTube](#)

**We turn now to our prayers of intercession.**

This is an opportunity to bring before the Lord all those on our heart. A chance to seek God's guidance, peace, love and comfort. Spend a minute or two in prayer now if you would like to that.

**HYMN:** We bring our time of worship and biblical exploration to a close as we sing together in an act of offering and dedication, [I Will Offer Up My Life - Lyric Video - YouTube](#)

**A final prayer:**

Father God, as we move forward from this moment in time, from this place and space of exploration concerning Your Living Word, anoint us with your oil of love, joy, peace and power so that we might be your light shining brightly here on earth for your Kingdom's sake. Amen.