

Apart but Together Worship

Hornsea URC Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021 – Lent in plain sight: DUST



Good morning and welcome.

Today is the second service in our series Lent in Plain Sight and today we are looking at Dust.

**Our first hymn** is As we are Gathered Jesus is here – [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

**Let us pray:**

Lord Jesus, you give us simple, clear instructions and yet we complicate matters and fail to follow them.

Forgive us for ignoring your teachings and going our own way.

Help us this day to leave behind those things that prevent us from following you.

Grant us the power to bring healing and proclaim the Kingdom in ways that

invite all we encounter to shake off the dust of pain they carry,

confident that you welcome us and give us what we need.

Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your 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.

For ever and ever Amen.

Our second hymn is Trust and Obey – [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

## READING:

Our first reading is from John Chapter 13 verses 1-5 and 12-17

### Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

*13 It was now the day before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved those in the world who were his own, and he loved them to the very end.*

*2 Jesus and his disciples were at supper. The Devil had already put into the heart of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, the thought of betraying Jesus.<sup>[a]</sup> 3 Jesus knew that the Father had given him complete power; he knew that he had come from God and was going to God. 4 So he rose from the table, took off his outer garment, and tied a towel around his waist. 5 Then he poured some water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist.*

*12 After Jesus had washed their feet, he put his outer garment back on and returned to his place at the table. "Do you understand what I have just done to you?" he asked. 13 "You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. 14 I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you. 16 I am telling you the truth: no slaves are greater than their master, and no messengers are greater than the one who sent them. 17 Now that you know this truth, how happy you will be if you put it into practice!*

Our second reading is from Luke Chapter 15 verses 8-10

### The Lost Coin

*8 "Or suppose a woman who has ten silver coins loses one of them—what does she do? She lights a lamp, sweeps her house, and looks carefully everywhere until she finds it. 9 When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together, and says to them, 'I am so happy I found the coin I lost. Let us celebrate!' 10 In the same way, I tell you, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents."*

Our next hymn is: At the Breaking of the dawn – [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

## Dust

There are lots of references to dust in the Bible, right from the beginning, in Genesis chapter 2.

"Then the Lord God formed a man from the **dust** of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being."

To Hebrews chapter 8:

"By coming up with a new plan, a new covenant between God and his people, God put the old plan on the shelf. And there it stays, gathering **dust**."

In our first reading we hear how Jesus knelt and washed the dust from the disciples' feet.

The washing of feet when you entered a house was common in those times as the roads were very dusty and people wore sandals, so it was polite to clean your feet before entering someone's house.

This, I think, is also a story of love, humility and service.

We are to love one another and not consider ourselves better or above anyone else and we should always be ready to serve God and one another in whatever ways we can.

Our second reading tells of the widow cleaning her house to find her lost coins.

Getting right into the forgotten corners and removing the dust.

Have you noticed when you are cleaning, and you move an ornament to dust the shelf there is a pattern in the dust – well there is in my house! We need to move the ornament and clean away the dust.

If we stand still on our journey with Christ we too are in danger of becoming covered in dust.

What pattern will our lives leave in the dust? We need to look in all the hidden corners of our lives and clean out the dust and become the shiny people God wants us to be.

In another reference to dust in Luke chapter 9 we read

“If people do not welcome you, leave their town and **shake the dust off** your feet as a testimony against them.”

This could sound a bit harsh to some people, like saying well if you won't listen to me I'm off!

But maybe what we are saying is not appropriate at that time. The people are not ready to hear the message yet.

Maybe the way we are doing things is wrong for that particular group.

Perhaps it is telling us to be ready to change our ways and our thinking?

If as a church we are not making disciples and growing the Kingdom perhaps we need to change, to look at different ways of reaching people.

Something to think about.

Lent is about preparing ourselves for Easter by prayer and reflection. We confess our failings and resolve to live more Godly lives based on the teachings of Jesus.

A time to shake the dust from our lives and clean up our act!

Amen

**Our next hymn is:** Be Thou My Vision – [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

Dust is such an ordinary thing isn't it?

Unless you are a very thorough cleaner you probably have dust somewhere in your home right now.

Perhaps you can see it from where you are sitting....!

As we read earlier, dust is a sign that things have stayed in the same spot for a while, and not had up close and personal attention from a duster or other cloth.

Sometimes dust is caused by normal everyday life – like fluff, clothes fibres, skin cells and pet dander.

Sometimes dust comes from nasties that have come into our space – like pollutants, dirt from outside, bacteria or dead bugs.

Wherever it comes from there comes a point when we notice it and realise it needs dealing with – or more embarrassingly perhaps someone draws it to our attention, as happened in these two photos....



Just as we may come to realise our physical homes need some care and attention, so it can happen in our inner lives too.

We can realise parts of our lives have become uncared for.

We become aware of the metaphorical dust of the cares of life, and things we've done wrong, and we recognise we're in need of a good spring clean.

The realisation can of course happen at any time, but the season of Lent we're just entering into, can offer a special opportunity to reflect on any places where we've become stale, where we've allowed the dust to settle, where like these images we need a good deep clean.

One of my favourite accounts in the life of Jesus involving dust is in John 8.

We read of a woman who has been caught in adultery being dragged before Jesus by the religious authorities.

The Jewish law said she should be stoned to death, what they asked, did Jesus say?



Jesus said – nothing.

Instead, he bent down and wrote something in the dust, before turning to the accusers to say "let the one without sin cast the first stone" – and then returned to his writing in the dust.

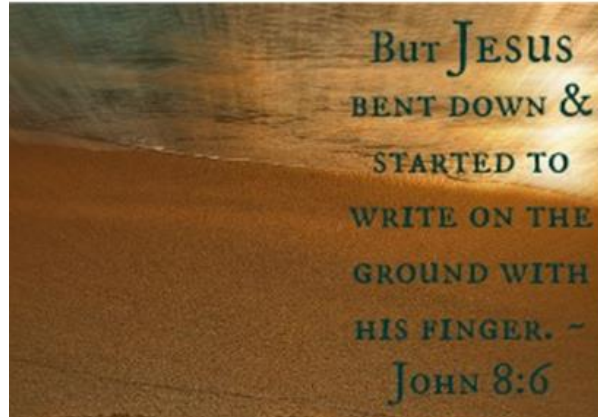
As you probably know the accusers left one by one, the oldest leaving first, leaving just the woman, and Jesus.

Jesus. The one without sin, the one who therefore could have cast a stone.

Yet He did not.

Instead, He says "I do not condemn you, go on your way. Sin no more."

Commentators, through the centuries have debated what it was that Jesus wrote in the dust that day.



Was it a message to the woman's accusers, to the woman herself, or perhaps just doodles to create a pause, taking the heat out of the situation?

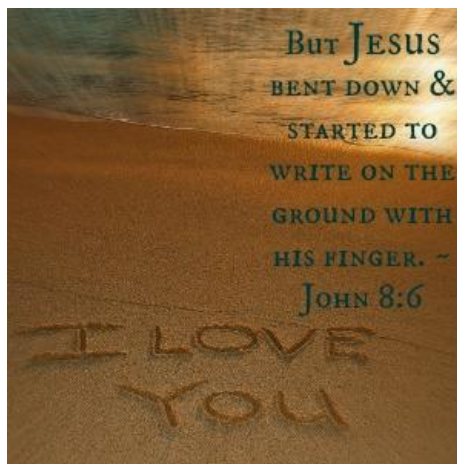
We just don't know.

But perhaps we have a clue in the way Jesus treats the 'sinful' woman before Him.

He speaks to her respectfully. He does not condemn her.

He does not hold her past against her, but sets her free to move on, to live differently.

We could say that by His words and deeds He in effect says to her 'I love you'.



And Jesus says the same to us when we come before Him with our faults, our failings, our stumbling, our sins.

He could condemn us, but He does not.

Instead, He invites us where we have got a bit complacent, taken a wrong turn, or lost the plot altogether

to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves down and start all over again.

He says to you, to me, to us, I do not condemn you.

Walk on in My way

Do not sin again.

**Prayer:**

Let us pray:

Recalling those images of the dirty shelf and van window there is a response after each block of prayer:

Lord clean, Lord wash

We start by praying for ourselves, remembering Jesus said we should not focus on taking the speck out of someone else's eye until we've sorted out the dirty great plank in our own!

Lord we acknowledge before you the dust and dirt in our own lives.

Even if we manage to hide it from others, even from ourselves, we know you see it.

Thank you that though you could condemn us you do not.

But nor do you want to leave us floundering in the dust, stuck in a rut.

Instead in Jesus you offer us forgiveness and a new start.

You do not just say "do not sin again" you help us live that way.

And not just the once but again and again whenever we fall and turn to you for pardon.

Lord, clean me

Lord, wash me

Now we pray for our world – for the dirt and dust in so many corners of it – some in plain sight, some pushed under the carpet, some known only to God.

Holy God, this earth is so lovely, but it is desecrated in so many ways.

By war, and famine, cruelty and carelessness.

Our hearts are broken by all the wrongs we are aware of.

How much more broken must yours be.

We pray

Lord, clean

Lord, wash

We pray for this country and our town.

Lord there is so much to be grateful for in our nation, and where we live.

But there is so much dirt and dust too, so much that disappoints and frustrates, that is plain wrong:

In our political system, in education, in our NHS, in other aspects of public life.

We pray

Lord, clean

Lord, wash

We pray for individuals in need at this time – those who are ill, bereaved, downcast, lonely or otherwise in difficulty.

In the quiet we lift to God those on our hearts today.

Lord lift up all who are face down in the dust, laid low by the things they are encountering.

We pray

Lord, clean

Lord, wash

And finally, we pray for the church throughout the world, including our church, our members, our leaders, our mission.

We read in the Bible of the image of the church as like a bride on her wedding day without a wrinkle or stain or even a speck of dust on her.

Yet at a local, national and international level in reality the church is so very far from this.

We fall so far short of what you call us to be.

Lord, please come and renew and refresh your church.

We pray

Lord, clean

Lord, wash

Amen

Our final hymn picks up on many themes we've touched on in our service. We might want to sing the last verse as a prayer.

**Our final hymn is:** Father I Place Into Your Hands – [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

### **Blessing:**

We finish with a blessing which is sung rather than said.

This blessing is used by the Northumbria Community at the end of morning prayer each day.

The accompanying photos are of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH/LISTEN TO THE BLESSING](#)

Amen