



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Mark 14:3-7,9 'The Anointing at Bethany'

³ While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. ⁴ But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way?' ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'



'Serendipity' is a delightful word. It trips off the tongue like a babbling brook. The dictionary defines it as "the unexpected occurrence of events in a happy and beneficial way." In this season of Pentecost we celebrate the serendipitous creative power of the Spirit of Christ – a Spirit that energized the first Christians, as it continues to do so today.

On many occasions Jesus ushers in serendipity moments. Imagine hearing his stories, illustrations, and parables for the first time. Think about the recipients of his healing touch. Consider his chance encounters with strangers. Envisage his own surprise when a woman generously anointed his feet with expensive perfume.

C.S. Lewis wrote down his thoughts as he experienced bereavement in a book called *Surprised by Joy*. Yes - serendipity moments can even occur in the midst of the most difficult times. Patients and relatives in our hospitals and care homes are experiencing the unexpected kindness of strangers. Rainbows of hope and thankfulness brighten up windows. Flowers come into bloom, a blackbird sings and sparrows have a splashing time in a birdbath. The filigree beauty of a spider's web catches the eye, and what about Captain (now Colonel) Tom doing his huge 'bit' for the NHS by exercising his walker? And let us bring to mind the many serendipity surprises we experience at Emmanuel, both in our worship and in our care for each other.

I suggest that a willingness to wonder, to use our imagination, and to be thankful for small as well as large mercies, enables us to recognise serendipity moments in our daily lives and to rejoice in them. Serendipity moments are like a sudden shaft of joyous light. They are a blessing. They help us to get things in perspective. They are epiphanies – disclosure moments – illustrative of a creative spirit alive and well in our lives today.

Prayer:

Grant to us Lord, the imagination, the gratitude,
and the openness we need to be able to recognize the surprise elements in life.
May it be that we ourselves can help create "serendipity" for others.
And may the creative power of the Spirit of Christ
stir and warm our hearts, minds, and wills afresh as on the day of Pentecost. Amen