

## **Remember Me...** *Meditations by Stella Bristow*

*This can be used as a reflective service for the whole church, it can be acted out as a drama within a worship service.*

We need five people to play the characters and a narrator. The characters are:

- Zacchaeus
- Simon, cured of leprosy
- Mary, Jesus' mother
- Mary, Martha's sister
- Judas

...the 5 will speak their parts at the lectern, place their bread on the alter and stay seated in the front of the church.

### **John 6:35**

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

#### ***Narrator:***

Many of the gospel stories and parables are centred on food. Jesus was always sharing meals with people, many of whom were considered to be social outcasts by the religious leaders of the day. However, it seems that there were no conditions placed on Jesus' acceptance of hospitality, but usually the disciples came along too! Perhaps this tells us that when we invite Jesus to sit with us, his friends come as well. We can't entertain Jesus in isolation. The poor, needy, despised and sidelined are the friends he brings with him and he insists they share in the hospitality. People came into a relationship with Jesus around the meal table, where they suddenly found that he was giving of himself and supplying their need for spiritual nourishment. "I am the bread of life," said Jesus. Let us remember...

Today we meet people who all shared meals with Jesus. For each of them, it was a very special occasion. They remember...

#### ***Zacchaeus:***

My name is Zacchaeus and I remember.

Yes, I know what you are thinking – nasty little man, up a tree, a tax-collector who everyone despised and nobody wanted to invite into their home, but you'd be wrong. Jesus actually asked to come to my home and share food. I nearly fell out of the tree in which I was hiding. I was really worried though, because I thought Jesus would condemn me in front of the whole crowd as everyone was looking up at me, but he simply asked for my hospitality.

That meeting completely changed my life. Over food, we talked about what I was doing – not just that I collected taxes, but, like so many other tax-collectors, I was adding on to the original figure and demanding extra money, lining my own pockets in the process. I was taking advantage of people who might have gone without food to feed the family in order to pay me. No wonder I had no friends

except other tax-collectors!

Jesus didn't seem to condemn or judge me or tell me what a bad lot I was. He just enabled me to see what I was doing and, once I was faced with that.... well, things changed for me. I felt that I had to do more than just give back what I had taken and now I don't have a job and I have no money. I don't know what I shall do. I am trusting that something will turn up, but I know I have done the right thing and, somehow, I feel like I can lift my head up high and walk tall.

*(walks to the altar & puts down his loaf of bread)*

***Music is played: MH 620 One Bread, One Body***

***Simon:***

I am Simon and I remember.

I used to be known as Simon the Leper. No one wants to associate with someone who has the stigma of leprosy. The very word drives fear into the hearts of those who hear it and, for the sufferer, it's a living death. So, like you, Zacchaeus, I was shinned by people, but for a different reason. I was desperate.

Jesus made me a whole person and, suddenly, life was good again – friends returned and I was included in the life of the village. Anyway, to celebrate, I decided to have a party and invite my old friends and I thought it would be good to invite Jesus too, though I wouldn't normally invite a carpenter to dine with me – he was not in my social class, you understand – but he was a bit of a celebrity and I thought it would give a certain interest to the evening, the novelty factor.

Things were going well, I thought, and then, suddenly, it all went pear-shaped. Seemingly from nowhere, this woman gatecrashes the party and broke a whole bottle of perfume over Jesus' head. It was so embarrassing. I don't know who she was or where she had come from, but, I tell you, I got the servants to bundle her out pretty quick. Jesus just sat there with all this highly perfumed oil spilling down over his head and shoulders – there was such a mess, in more ways than one. The servants brought some towels and tried to mop up the worst of it. After the initial anger and embarrassment, one or two started to smile and laugh – well, in some ways it was so funny to see him sitting there, but, as Judas pointed out, what a waste of good money.

Then there was another shock as Jesus came to the defence of the woman. He pointed out, to my shame, that she had done what I had failed to do. She had anointed him with perfume, whereas I had not even washed his feet as a good host should.

I felt so ashamed after all that Jesus had done for me and it made me realise that I hadn't shown him even the basic courtesy.

*(walks to the altar & puts down his loaf of bread)*

***Music is played: MH 620 One Bread, One Body***

**Mary:**

I am Mary, Jesus' mother. Of course I remember many happy family meals – the children's birthdays, Passover, Hanukkah and especially Jesus' bar mitzvah. I remember too the time when he was invited to John's wedding in Cana and he took all his new friends and the wine ran out. I remember he was so reluctant to get involved because he said he was having a good time enjoying himself and it really wasn't his problem, but I kept on at him until he relented and, my, the wine tasted good!

There were sad times too, especially when Joseph died and there was an empty place at the table and after Jesus left home to start his ministry, when there was another empty place. I used to worry then in case he wasn't getting enough to eat, so sometimes, when they were in the area, I would take them all some home cooked food. I wasn't around at the last meal he had – the one we now know was his last supper with his disciples – but I helped to prepare it. I just wonder what was going through his mind as he shared that time with his friends. Once in a while John comes by and we have a meal together and we remember.

*(walks to the altar & puts down her loaf of bread)*

***Music is played: MH 620 One Bread, One Body***

**Mary:**

My name is also Mary. You remember, I am sure, Martha's sister Mary. Jesus often came to our house for meals when he was in the area. It was somewhere he could feel at home, relax and enjoy home cooking. We became his family too. Martha is a marvellous cook but, oh dear, she gets in such a tizzy when we have visitors. She goes to endless trouble and wants everything to be just right. I know that Jesus would be pleased just to have bread and cheese but, no, Martha had to make her best dishes for him. That was her way of expressing her love for him. Now me, well I just wanted nothing more than to sit at his feet and listen to him talking. Martha had made her choice and I mine. The conflict came when she felt that I ought to have made the same choice as she had. I told her quietly not to fuss, but she did make me feel guilty. Then, not getting a response from me she appealed to Jesus. I was so relieved to hear Jesus say, 'Mary has made her choice', but I could see that she was deeply hurt.

Now, of course, that time has gone – we no longer have the pleasure of his physical company – and I am pleased that I made the choice I did, and I know Martha was pleased that she did her very best for his comfort. So we were *both* doing the right thing. We had each made our choices with Jesus' best interests at heart.

*(walks to the altar & puts down her loaf of bread)*

***Music is played: MH 620 One Bread, One Body***

***Judas:***

Judas – that’s my name.

A name synonymous now with the word ‘traitor’.

You’re wondering how it is that I can be invited to share food with these people. Perhaps it is because we all need to be reminded that we do things of which we are ashamed. That one split second in history, I made a mistake. I tried to force Jesus’ hand, to make him act, to take up the sword and fight for what he believed. At the time I thought there was nothing wrong with that. Many of you have pushed others into taking action by fighting wars or getting involved in conflict of one sort or another. History is littered with such moments.

You believed in what you were doing: so did I. He knew what was in my mind, of course, and instead of restraining me, he blessed me with the best portion of food during the last meal. It was the last supper for Jesus and the last for me also. I regretted what I’d done so bitterly, that I could not go on living. Perhaps the biggest mistake I made was not believing that I could be forgiven.

*(walks to the altar & puts down his loaf of bread)*

***Music is played: MH 620 One Bread, One Body***