

THE HARDEST PART

Things to Come

SERMON NOTES APRIL 6, 2025

The Fifth Sunday in Lent
Scripture: John 12:1-11

JOHN 12:1-11 (THE MESSAGE)

¹⁻³ Six days before Passover, Jesus entered Bethany where Lazarus, so recently raised from the dead, was living. Lazarus and his sisters invited Jesus to dinner at their home. Martha served. Lazarus was one of those sitting at the table with them. Mary came in with a jar of very expensive aromatic oils, anointed and massaged Jesus' feet, and then wiped them with her hair. The fragrance of the oils filled the house.

⁴⁻⁶ Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, even then getting ready to betray him, said, "Why wasn't this oil sold, and the money given to the poor? It would have easily brought three hundred silver pieces." He said this not because he cared two cents about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of their common funds but also embezzled them.

⁷⁻⁸ Jesus said, "Let her alone. She's anticipating and honoring the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you. You don't always have me."

⁹⁻¹¹ Word got out among the Jews that he was back in town. The people came to take a look, not only at Jesus but also at Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. So, the high priests plotted to kill Lazarus because so many of the Jews were going over and believing in Jesus on account of him.

"Jesus' disciples are persons, like Mary, whom he loves and who love him and live out that love!"

I. "RADICAL, EXTRAVAGANT AND EMBARRASSING"

- A. Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet is a scandalous act, an intimate encounter, and a questionable extravagance. Yet, it is an act of love, thanksgiving, devotion, and discipleship!
- B. The oil, a pound of pure Nard, that Mary used to anoint Jesus' feet was expensive, costing a year's salary and was used typically to prepare a body for burial.
- C. Mary's spontaneous, uninhibited response to Jesus embodies Jesus' commandment to love (even before he teaches it!) and anticipates that Jesus' hour is at hand, and his final anointing.
- D. This kind of love for Jesus, expressed in Mary's actions, defines response to Jesus and discipleship!!!
- E. Jesus' time among his disciples is now limited and the urgency of response heightened. It is six days before Passover. Jesus' passion and death are imminent!
- F. In John's Gospel, this is the turning point from what scholars call the Book of Signs, to the Book of Passion, or Glory, as Jesus' earthly ministry draws to a close.

When has Jesus' love for you, prompted you to commit a radical, extravagant, scandalous act of love???

II. "DEAD MAN WALKING!"

- A. Jesus has returned to Bethany, the town of Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus whom Jesus has recently "raised" from the dead!
- B. Jesus left Bethany shortly before because of the death threats the leaders of the Jews issued, precipitated by the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection.
- C. John says that Jesus' teaching, healing, and lastly, Lazarus' resurrection, were threatening to the "status quo" of the Jewish authorities for both religious and political reasons: 1) More and more people believed in him; 2) They were afraid that his popularity would incite the Romans to tighten their grip of control on the Jewish people.
- D. His return to Bethany is a sign that Jesus is moving toward his "hour" and the culmination of his mission and ministry.
- E. Mary's unrestrained, unmitigated act of love is contrasted by John with Judas' protest and complaint about the "cost" of such an act! John's commentary about Judas' character also foreshadows his betrayal of Jesus, and his lack of compassion or understanding of what is happening right before him.

How has Jesus brought life or perhaps caused conflict within you?

III. "SEEING THROUGH JESUS' EYES!"

- A. Jesus' response to Judas to "Let her alone.... she is honoring the day of my burial.... you always have the poor with you...you don't always have me (quoting Deut. 15:11)," initially seems quite callous, but is simply his recognition of the imminence of his departure, and acknowledgement of Mary's gift to him!
- B. Jesus' words are also an invitation to all who will hear that such acts of love are at the heart of following, loving, and serving him!
- C. The urgency of Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God calls for faithful living, and lives of service and servanthood...there is no time for idle curiosity, personal agenda, or the commentary and judgment of mere spectators who are not engaged in serving Christ!
- D. Once a person has experienced the love of Christ, and seen themselves, the world and others through the eyes of Jesus, nothing is ever the same...there will be conflicts within and without, caused by the radical love that Jesus calls us to live!!!
- E. But there is nothing more important, nothing more transforming and freeing, nothing more full of joy, than knowing that you are who, and where God would have you be, and living in love with God and God's people!

How are you living, loving, and serving Jesus today?