

## Mark 14: 3-9

While Jesus 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. But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. 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. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. 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.'

**Meditation:** The woman's action in this story is one of love for Jesus. Love, when it is genuine, involves giving, and giving involves cost. The question among many who are also present is whether this particular act and the particular costs associated with it are appropriate. Are they worthy of the recipient? A key focal point of Jesus' message is a concern for the poor and a judgement on the lavish wastefulness of the rich. Is this action not also one of wastefulness and lack of concern?

Evidently, there is also a place for wastefulness when it is done out of love - a holy waste. This woman offers what she has with reverent awe, love and gratitude toward Jesus. And Jesus responds accordingly. There is an important place for costly acts of love in the kingdom of God, just as there is an obligation to serve the poor who are, sadly, a perpetual presence in the kingdoms of this world. One's obligations on one level do not eliminate the beauty of one's acts on another.

In this time of pandemic, what acts of kindness and love have you been inspired to offer above and beyond something you would typically do when life is just humming along? In what ways have you been able to find some purpose in this time of humdrum, the same old, same old, day after day, by reaching out, getting activated, and finding some core within you ready to shine forth? It may only be a beginning. It may only be small and insignificant in terms of what is noticeable. And yet, it may be exactly the kind of difference that can lift you out of despair and focus your life in a more life-giving way. What beauty are you inspired to create and how are you becoming more of God's artwork?

**Prayer:** I must confess, O God, that too often I cannot find the inspiration or motivation to reach out in love creatively toward others. It's hard enough loving myself some days. I need to soak in your grace – your free and lavish gift of love – deep in my heart. If I am to find new energy to be your servant in this time of pandemic, it has to come from an authentic place in me. Show me the beauty of your costly love and may new depths of loving emerge from within me, even in simple ways; Amen.