

Church of Christ Congregational
Worshipping at Home
March 22, 2020

Consider: Besides the Last Supper, Holy Week contains another important story that happens at dinner. Earlier in the week, Jesus and his followers gather for a meal, and a woman shows up unexpectedly to anoint Jesus in an extravagant show of devotion. To say she caused quite a “stir” might be understating it a bit. We imagine ourselves in the room and we see the looks of judgment and even outrage on the faces around us. Are we ourselves moved by her generosity and outpouring of emotion? Or are we uncomfortable as Jesus refers to his own death? Does our complaining or anger really serve to hide our own fear? Jesus invites us to tell this story “in remembrance of her.” What uncomfortable stories are we called to tell in our time?

Confess: It is so hard to not be afraid. Sometimes our fear makes us less compassionate, and more judgmental. We think we can ward off getting hurt by holding back, unwilling to risk putting ourselves out there for the sake of love. Forgive us, O God. Encourage us to extravagant acts of love, especially when we are frightened. You entered our story through Jesus, now help us to enter fully into the story of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Sing or Listen: [When Mary Poured A Rich Perfume \(Those Who Care\)](#)

Be Assured: Know this-There is no limit on love. Love doesn't run out, and you can start giving more of it anytime. You are forgiven and freed, encouraged and loved by a God who wants you to live fully.

Read God's Word:

Psalm 23 (NRSV)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

3 he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths

for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no evil;

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff—

they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

my whole life long.

Mark 14: 3-9 (NRSV)

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. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. 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."

Watch: [Entering the Passion of Jesus](#)

Think or Discuss: The story of the woman with the alabaster jar appears in all four Gospels. Usually that means that it was such an extraordinary moment that no one would forget. Not only that, Jesus makes a point to instruct those present to remember this woman. Alongside this story today, we read the words of the Psalmist, who also speaks of extravagant love and presence in the midst of the valleys of the shadows of death. The tradition of anointing with oil goes back a

long way, and in the Psalm, the image of being bathed in oil is set at a table on which an overflowing cup symbolizes the kind of love we are to emulate as children of God and disciples of Jesus. The things that seem so clear, such as the imperative to care for the poor or the imperative to anoint a body for burial, can be in conflict with each other. And then what do we do? In times like these, it seems Jesus might invite us to think about how we want to be remembered.

Do: Draw, journal, or make a collage about what you would like to be remembered for.

A Time of Prayer and Reflection

We remember today the extravagant love shown to Jesus and his invitation to remember this woman through our actions of loving others. For when we experience the valley of the shadow of death, we are called to be with another. When we aren't able to be with one another in person our thinking needs to shift. How can we be present to others in ways that are not physical?

We remember today those who tend to the sick and dying-caregivers, medical professionals, hospice workers and humanitarians who risk leaving home and even enter dangerous places to help others. Let us remember and lift up those people in our lives that need our advocacy, presence and prayers.

Pray: Use this time to pray, silently, at first, and then for others who need your prayers. Finally, pray the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sing or Listen: [The Servant Song](#)

***OUR COMMON COMMISSION**

Let us now go forth into the world in peace; being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no person evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all people, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Bless and Be Blessed: May the God of Peace and the Peace of God be with you always.

