

## Lent 5 - The What Happened at the Reception

John 12:1-8

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Last Night

Odd  
Moments  
remembered

- Thanks for asking, we did have a very nice dinner party last night in honor of Jesus of Nazareth
  - And overall, it was a great success...but there were a few odd moments
    - And I would bet that people will not remember what was served or the wine list, but it's always those odd moments that people will remember (forever) and talk about...so just to get the story straight, let me tell you what happened
- All this started when my sisters, Martha and Mary heard that Jesus was coming back to Bethany. They thought it would be nice if they could put on a little dinner for Jesus and his disciples,
  - as a small token of thanks to Jesus, for raising me, Lazarus, from the dead;
  - Now you may remember that Jesus had to leave town after he raised me from the dead.
    - He and his disciples went to Ephraim, near the wilderness, on account of the Caiaphas and the other priests, who had pronounced a death sentence on Jesus
  - And the priests have also targeted me. I hear from my friends that the priests are just waiting for the right moment to pick Jesus up, and they'll come for me right after that.
    - But still, I think I might survive this.
      - Did you see the crowds in front of our house last night? Those who wanted to see the Miracle Worker? I don't think the priests will cause me to disappear without there being a massive outcry.

The Plot  
against  
Jesus

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Who was there?

- Well, as ever, Martha was doing her perfect hostess thing, making sure all the finger bowls were just so and the meal was prepared to perfection.

- Mary, as ever, was mingling among Jesus and the disciples. She does have a talent for making people at ease and asking the right questions to keep the conversation moving along.
- Me? Mostly I was talking to Jesus, because the other disciples were a little scared of me because I had been to the other side of the veil and back again and they didn't know what to make of that.
  - And, like I mentioned, I think that the disciples blame me for the death sentence put on Jesus by Caiaphas.
    - I am the walking example of the power of Jesus and the threat Jesus is to the powers that be in Jerusalem.
- But laying all that aside, everything was going well until Mary brought out the oil from the storage room and anointed the feet of Jesus. The Oil
- This wasn't just the usual olive oil, it was the nard we had been saving to be used to anoint the family at our deaths.
  - Mary and Martha had already used some of it on me a few weeks ago, when I had died
  - But Mary poured all the rest of it...a whole pound of nard, a year's wages worth of nard, on the feet of Jesus and then wiped his feet with her hair.
- Well, that brought the conversation to a close.
  - And as the aroma of the nard filled the house, none of the disciples said a word.
  - But then Judas piped up and said something about this being a total waste of money, that we should have sold the oil and given it to the poor
    - And Jesus responded, saying, ""You will always be with the poor, but you will not always be with me. Mary has observed this custom in anticipation of the day of my burial....and if Caiaphas has anything to do with it, that day will come sooner than you think."''

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Well now...Judas

- You know, I don't want to think ill of other people, and I hate to gossip, but I think that Judas protests too much.

- Jesus alluded something about that to me before the dinner.
  - [Jesus does confide in me. We have been close friends since that time we met at the Jordan and were looking at the practices of the Essenes.
    - He also told me to always remember that I had been specially graced by God in being brought back from the underworld,
      - and he intimated to me that something similar will happen to him, and very soon, but I'm not sure what he meant by that.]
- In any event, Jesus told me that he worried that Judas was beset by his own private demons and that Judas—and these demons—would be very instrumental in what would happen in Jerusalem during the upcoming Passover.
- Jesus also said that, sadly, he once had the highest expectations for Judas. Demons
  - Judas Iscariot, as a man from Kerioth, was the only disciple from from the land of Judah, and everyone knows that we people of Judea are better record-keepers and more detail oriented than those people of Galilee, so Judas was the perfect choice to be treasurer.
    - But now, it seemed, Judas was helping himself to money from the common treasury.
- Well, if he did, he, no doubt, had some excuses for his behavior.
- You know, I think that Judas might be thinking of himself as shut out by this group of Galileans,
  - and, as you well know, when you start to consider yourself as an outsider, it's very easy to become anti-social and bitter, The Outcast
    - and, I fear that if Judas doesn't take care of his own bad tendencies, or if no one cares for him, anything might happen
- And I also blame myself for the actions of Judas Iscariot.
- It wasn't until Jesus raised me from the dead that Caiaphas got really serious about putting an end to Jesus

- And perhaps Judas thinks that, with this death sentence on Jesus, that the game is over.
  - The authorities are tightening the noose around Jesus and his disciples and all of us,
    - and now, perhaps, Judas believes that it is every man for himself in order to escape what was coming.
- Or maybe Judas thinks that my being raised from the dead and Caiaphas' death threat that came from that is just what was needed to push Jesus over the edge to finally become a military messiah, which is what Judas wanted all along.
  - It could be that Judas believes that Jesus doesn't really know what's really needed in this world, and it's up to Judas Iscariot to manipulate Jesus into a box so that he'll be forced to defend himself.
  - Somehow I don't think that anything good would come of that.

The Game  
is Over

Push Jess  
Over the  
Edge

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## Gratitude

- But forget about Judas and his outburst. That's really not that important.
  - What's really important for me is that Mary poured a year's worth of nard on the feet of Jesus, and I believe that this was money well spent.
- I could see that all the disciples were thinking what Judas said aloud: Why is Mary anointing Jesus - why is she wasting all this precious oil?
- However, my sister Mary understood better than anyone that we need to take some time to honor and praise Jesus instead of continually asking him to do things for us
  - Mary fully understands that we will *always* be able to find time to help others, and there will always be others who will need our help.
    - But she seems to understand that all of us have only precious little time offer some comfort to Jesus for all he has done for us.

Precious  
Little Time

Unreasonable  
Women

- Now you might think that Mary used an unreasonable amount of nard on the feet of Jesus,
  - But as you well know, my two sisters, Martha and Mary, are very unreasonable women.
  - When I died they could have been very reasonable and could have just accepted all those stories we heard about the miracles of Jesus as just that, nice stories.
  - They could have been very reasonable and simply accepted the fact of my death as a given
  - They could have been very reasonable and not have asked for the impossible from Jesus.
    - And had they been very reasonable, things would have remained as they were: I would have remained in my tomb, and Mary and Martha would have lived out the remainder of their lives as best they could.
- Instead Martha and Mary had a very unreasonable hope that Jesus would provide.
  - Hope was all they needed.
    - And it was a new hope that Jesus provided...that lifted them out of despair.
      - That showed them, that God doesn't close the books on us, that we no longer have to live our lives in crushed acceptance of what we believe is our fate in life.
  - So when people in Bethany asked, "How can Jesus the Messiah help? What difference can he make?"
    - I am the walking example of what happens.
    - "Lazarus," Jesus said. "Come out of your tomb."
  - And I don't believe that the miracle just ends with me.
    - With the Messiah we see people doing things that they have always failed to do...to walk, to see, to be healed of their sins.

Grateful

      - They were given the grace to be what they never could be
      - They were given grace that is utterly beyond our understanding.

- We have much to be grateful for.
  - And what should be the limit of our gratitude?
    - Is thanking Jesus for my life worth a year's wages?
    - How much do I owe Jesus for
      - Being able to talk?
      - Being able to see?
      - For being forgiven of my sins?
    - Those are questions that we must ask ourselves every day.
- So all in all, our little dinner party last night will probably be remembered for a long time
  - But the lesson I'm taking from it is that Mary showed us that we can never be too extravagant in showing our gratitude to God
  - And as Jesus suggested, we will always have plenty of opportunities to be equally extravagant in taking care of those who are less fortunate than we are.