

Day 9 Devotion

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

John 12:1-8

Don't you think Mary knew Jesus' heart in ways the disciples and his followers did not know yet?

When we meet Jesus in our story, the plot to kill him was underway, his death and the grief that would follow loomed. Jesus gathers with his friends in the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Lazarus - recently risen Lazarus - is at the table, as is Judas who would soon betray him. Martha serves because that's her love language and someone has to be the responsible one in this bunch. Then, in the middle of dinner, Mary gets up and again kneels at Jesus' feet. It seemed so strange and so *Mary-like* to everyone there. Mary isn't paying attention to what everyone else thinks. She knows what needs to be done and she loves Jesus with abandon.

A love that filled the entire house with its scent. Mary takes a *pound* of perfume and anoints Jesus' feet. That is an outrageous amount of perfume, somewhere akin to a milk carton's worth. It surely filled the house, leaked out into the street. Did it travel the two miles between Bethany and Jerusalem, wafting into the halls of power deciding upon Jesus' fate? It is entirely too much perfume. But Mary is simply following what she knows is the way of love.

"Jesus started by making too much wine. When he goes fishing, he catches too many fish. Every time he makes dinner he ends up with baskets of leftovers. Too much is kind of his thing. Jesus never says, "that's too much." He never counsels us to reign in our generosity. He never suggests that we should be reasonable with our abundance." (Rev. Sarah Wiles, written in a paper shared in my preaching group By the Vine. Sarah is the pastor of Blacksburg Presbyterian Church in Blacksburg, VA.)

Mary did what needed to be done. In her pouring out of a pound of perfume, she follows in the way of her Savior - being so full of love and devotion, it overflows and cannot be tamed. A love that ignores the commentary of others, a love that casts aside rationality, a love that honors the first love poured out when God created humankind in God's own image and a love that only Mary seems to glimpse is being prepared to be poured out upon the cross. A love that is extravagant and holy because it is a love that tends to the neediest part of another.

At the end of our story, after Judas fussed about Mary's outrageous act, Jesus says, *Leave her alone*. Leave her alone and pay attention: love like *this*. Love without concern of cost. Love one another with tenderness and attention. Love extravagantly. Love abundantly. Love without fear. That's what I've been trying to show you. That's what I *will* show you.

Rev. Taylor Lewis Guthrie Hartman

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*Loving God, again and again you love us without hesitation.
May we give even a measure of your abundance back out into the world today
and may we prepare ourselves for the fullest measure of your Son's love
to pour out in the days to come.
Amen.*

Prompt: How might you love extravagantly, abundantly today?