

An Extravagant Display of Devotion

Closer: Developing Life with God
April 9, 2017 – Joel Moses

John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

⁹ Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

1 John 4:19

We love because he first loved us.

The aroma of extravagant love.
So pure. So lovely.
Flowing from the veined alabaster vase
of Mary's broken heart.
A heart broken against the hard reality
of her Savior's imminent death.

Mingled with tears, the perfume became,
by some mysterious chemistry of Heaven,
not diluted but more concentrated.
Potent enough behind the ears of each century
for the scent to linger to this day.

Doubtless, the fragrance, absorbed by his garment
as it flowed from his head,
Accompanied Christ through the humiliation of his trial,
the indignity of his mockings,
the pain of his beatings,
the inhumanity of his cross.
Through the heavy smell of sweat and blood,
A hint of that fragrance must have arisen
from his garment,
Until, at shameful last, the garment was stripped
and gambled away.

And maybe, just maybe, it was that scent
amid the stench of humanity rabbled around the cross,
that gave the Savior the strength to say:
"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And as Mary walked away from the cross,
The same scent probably still lingered in the now-limp hair
she used to dry the Savior's feet.
A reminder of the love that spilled
from his broken alabaster body.
So pure. So lovely.
So truly extravagant.
It was a vase he never regretted breaking.
Nor did she.

- Ken Gire