

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday March 17, 2019. "Encounters: Woman anoints Jesus".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Recap Series.

Last week we began a new series called, "**Encounters**". It's a look at a variety of ordinary people who had an "**Encounter**" with Jesus, and how that moment changed the direction of their life. These stories are mostly from the final week in the life of Jesus, and will take us to Easter on April 21, and the ultimate "**Encounter**", all those who witnessed that day.

And as we look at ordinary people and how their life changed when they met Jesus, we're going to draw specific truths and principles about what we can learn from those "**Encounters**" that can give us things to use in our everyday life.

C. Sunday.

Sunday began with a very powerful video skit, in which a young girl talked about what it felt like, the experience, of being unseen. She felt unworthy, unloveable, too messed up and almost felt invisible...and it was such a difficult experience. And in that video, she shared about what it felt like when she finally was 'seen', and 'known'...just for her, not the things she had done. And this experience was such an affirming feeling. She knew she had made some mistakes in life, but no matter what she had done, she still had value and worth. There is no better feeling in the world. Being 'seen' made her feel validated, like she was finally a 'real' person.

Was there a time in your past that you felt invisible, unseen, like you didn't matter?

Have you ever been in a crowd of people but felt alone?

What was that story, and what was it like?

D. Scripture.

This video was the jumping off point for the message Sunday. The story is such a familiar one, it's told in all four gospels, (the accounts of the life of Jesus), and even those outside of the church have at least heard of, or know something about this story. So, read the account from Sunday morning in **Matthew 26:6-13**, and then we'll dig deeper into it.

As always, what jumped out to you about this passage?

What did you noticed about all of the characters in the story? Jesus, the disciples, the woman?

Kal highlighted a few things that he said were 'truths' from this story.

One, this probably wasn't the first time this woman had "**Encountered**" Jesus. And if you read the John account of this story, we're told it's Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who absolutely knew Jesus from before. But this act of anointing Jesus with oil was an outward sign of a previous "**Encounter**".

Two, I think we can safely say, that previous **“Encounter”** was what was described as a beautiful act. For Jesus to step out and to affirm someone’s personhood, (such academic language huh?), when the rest of the world had pushed her to the margins of society, was a beautiful life-giving act. Of course Jesus was always doing this. As one minister has put it; **“whenever a line was drawn in the sand of who was in and who was out, Jesus was always on the other side of the line”**. Jesus was always welcoming the ‘other’. People deemed too broken, too sinful, too messed up, the wrong lifestyle, to be embraced. They Had to change first. Three, and because this woman was shown such unconditional love, and seen in for who she was, there was this nonsensical, over the top, outpouring of love back to Jesus. In fact, in the NIV version Jesus referred her anointing him as a **“beautiful thing”**. What she did made no logical sense, wasn’t practical, but she couldn’t help herself. She was once invisible, unseen, disposable. And now Jesus had both seen and loved her, and she couldn’t not respond in an overt way to this.

Now there is a natural conversation about this story, that wasn’t fleshed out in much detail Sunday, but we’re going to touch on it here. And that is the reaction by the disciples about what this woman did. The scripture says they were “indignant”, and claimed the money could have been used for the poor. That sounds like a viable charge, but based on the other stories about the disciples, this excuse doesn’t seem to fit their priorities. What it sounds like, is whatever this woman’s lifestyle choices were, whatever sins she had committed, by religious rules it should have invalidated her as acceptable. She made her choices, they came with natural consequences, and one of them is exclusion. And Jesus was blowing thru that accepted understanding.

So...let’s dig down deep in this.

Why is it difficult to accept and love certain people?

What are those things that you, or the church, has a difficult time overlooking?

And the tough one.

How do we find that place to both love, affirm, the person without condoning their behavior?

What would/could that look like?

Because of what Jesus did in first welcoming and embracing this person. And then her act of responding to Jesus’ love with her own display of love, there were some quotes shown.

First, Jesus said what this woman did was a **“beautiful thing”**. And I think it’s safe to say, her response was also a beautiful thing.

So here are the quotes.

“Beauty will save the world”. -Fyodor Dostoevsky

“A beautiful thing lasts forever”.

“Beauty is truth embodied”.

React to these about how they’re true and what does that mean to us.

E. Challenge.

This “Encounter” shows the power of looking past what a person has done, or still may be doing, on the outside and into who they are as a child of God. And the power of doing that well to literally change lives.

What would it look like for you to practice this same kind of radical inclusion in your world?

What would you need to do first, before being able to love and ‘see’ others like Jesus saw her?