

5 Days to Calvary: Holy Week Devotions

Wednesday

When Everything Stops, What Stands Out?

Dale Rooks is the kind of guy who either teaches you to smile or tests your sanctification. In 2004 while Rooks was a crossing guard in Florida, he had grown frustrated with the continual danger students endured due to heavy-footed drivers who refused to slow down during crossing hours. Having tried several other solutions with no real success Rooks finally found an answer in a common household item. He wrapped a hairdryer in electrical tape and carried it with him to the crossing zone. Drivers who had ignored every other strategy now found themselves quickly pressing their brakes because the uniformed crossing guard seemed to be holding a radar gun. Dale simply pointed the bathroom appliance at the windshields and watched as the drivers miraculously began decelerating.¹

Slowing down is no easy task for most of us. But what if you only had three days left on earth? That would seem to create even more urgency. Which is why the traditional account of what Jesus did on Wednesday of Holy Week works like a radar gun (or at least a disguised hairdryer) for our lives: He knew the cross was looming, but Jesus didn't preach any sermons on this day, He didn't heal any bodies on this day and He really didn't do anything typically associated with His ministry on that day. We simply see Jesus reclining at a table that day. However, while the activities of Jesus might have been limited that day the lives of two other characters, Mary, and Judas, suddenly came into clearer focus precisely because of the unexpectedly, unhurried pace of Jesus the last week of His life.

It was on this day at Simon's house we see the unmistakably memorable passion and praise being poured onto Jesus by Mary. In John 12 she is the woman kneeling at the feet of Jesus with the alabaster jar filled with treasured ointment. But in John 11 she is also the woman who could do nothing much more than fall at the feet of Jesus and weep in His presence over the death of her brother Lazarus. And looking further back, she is also the woman in Luke 10 who sat at the feet of Jesus being taught in the same way as the disciples.

The woman who seems to keep showing up wherever the Lord is finds Him once again. Why? Because He slowed down long enough not only to rest, but to give others a chance to worship. We speak so much of the movement of God, but what

¹ *The Connection newsletter, ChristianityToday.com (9-8-04)*

do we do with a God who chooses to rest on the 7th day (Gen. 2:2), who doesn't go anywhere in a hurry (John 7:8-9), who sees no difference in a single day or a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8), and who always seems to be willing to rest for a while at the table (John 12:1-2)? It's hard to say what everyone might do, but we do know what Mary did: she worshipped. And because of Jesus' willingness to slow down and Mary's choice to saturate that moment with the aroma of her gratitude and praise, Jesus makes it clear that her story would be told forever (Matt. 26:13).

On the other hand, we also see Judas. Matthew's account tells us that Jesus' lack of urgency coupled with Mary's "wasting" of the treasured ointment drove Judas Iscariot to enter a deal with the chief priests: 30 pieces of silver for the location, identification, and arrest of Jesus. It is worth noting how the stillness of Jesus invokes worship from one and betrayal from another. But perhaps we learn here that it is precisely when God slows down and brings us to moments where our urgency meets His patience that the content of our hearts is revealed. If we want to use Jesus for our own gain, then His inactivity will cause us to take matters into our own hands. But if our only desire is to be at His feet, to worship Him, to know Him and to learn from Him then those moments when His pace slows down will become treasured opportunities for us to pour out our praise on Him like Mary did.

When God points the hairdryer at our life and slows everything down, what comes to the surface? Are we angry that He isn't going as fast as we'd like? Or do we see this as an opportunity to realign ourselves with His truth and presence in that moment? When everything stops, what stands out in our lives?