

"Sacrifice 101: Loving Extravagantly" **by Rev. John C. Tittle**

Scripture Reading: Mark 14: 3-9 NRSV

³ While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. ⁴ But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

Discussion Questions:

1. What jumps out at you about this passage?
2. How do you usually feel when you join a group of strangers at a party, gathering, or church setting?
3. Picture yourself in this scene--what would it be like to be the different characters?
 - a. Simon the Leper who hosted the party?
 - b. One of the dinner guests?
 - c. The unnamed woman who crashed the party?
 - d. Jesus, being anointed?
4. Why do you think the anonymous woman did what she did? Do you think she knew that she was preparing Jesus for his burial? Why did she use all of it?
5. Was Jesus saying that we should not care for the poor? What was he saying?
6. It is important to have practices set into place in our lives. It is also equally important to be ready to be generous or responsive in a moment's notice. How do we cultivate both planned and spontaneous expression of faith?
7. Both kings and corpses were anointed in the ancient world. Which act of anointing do you think was at the forefront of the woman's mind? Could it have been both?
8. Jesus stood up for the woman who was being shamed by the dinner guests. What does this say about Jesus' attitude towards bullies?
9. Jesus said this woman's act will be remembered and talked about wherever the gospel is proclaimed around the world. What hope do you see in that passage? What does this say about Jesus' understanding of the resurrection, before he was crucified? Why did Jesus say that this woman's act will always be remembered?
10. What is your specific sacrifice that God might be calling you to give? How much will you give?