

THE FIRST 15

Friday, April 26, 2024

Today is Friday, April 26 and we are studying the Gospel of John.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, be present with me as a new day dawns. Help me remember to seek you first in life before all things. As I enter this time of prayer and reflection, I calm my mind, quiet my thoughts and slow my breath. I gently inhale your love, joy and peace as firmly as I exhale any negative thoughts, cares or concerns. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 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. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." 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. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." John 12:1-8

REFLECTION

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many people believed in him. They knew Lazarus. They knew he was sick. They saw Lazarus die, they attended his funeral, they saw him buried and knew he was in the grave for four days, now they saw him alive. They believed. The chief priests and Pharisees were alarmed. So many people were following Jesus. They plotted to take his life. For safety, Jesus and the disciples withdrew to a wilderness place until time for the Passover. The religious authorities gave orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was staying should report it so that they could arrest him.

After a few days, Jesus returned to Bethany to be with Lazarus, Mary and Martha. They threw a dinner party in his honor. Martha served the food, Lazarus enjoyed Jesus' company and in a loving gesture Mary anointed Jesus' feet with expensive fragrant oil and instead of a towel used her long hair to wipe them dry.

This was not a normal foot washing for a guest, it was an elaborate, expensive show of love that only Jesus could understand and explain. Mary's action prepared Jesus for his impending death. Mary's action was a symbolic embalming of his body for burial as though he were already dead. This was a sign forward in anticipation of his glorification. There was a threat of a violent death on the horizon but Mary pointed forward beyond her knowledge and understanding to the

suffering, death, burial and resurrection that lay ahead. Her gift was touching, extravagant and memorable.

I consider what gift I have to give Jesus. What thing of value could I lovingly bestow upon my Lord? A gift of gratitude for laying down his life for me. A gift of love for loving me first. A gift of joy for being in his presence. A gift to remember our times together marked by the fragrance of the holiness he brings. Mary gave what she had - a pint of pure nard, expensive perfume. She didn't know why she had been saving this valuable item until this particular day. She used what she possessed, long locks of her flowing hair to gently wipe his anointed feet clean. Her hair would have held that fragrance for days still bearing the aroma during the Passover events. A poignant reminder as she heard of his betrayal and arrest, watched him carry his cross down the Via Dolorosa and hang on the cross of Calvary.

Ask: How could I show my love for Christ and his sacrifice for me? How might I love him by displaying sacrificial love to others?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you went willingly to the cross for the salvation of many souls including mine. As Mary demonstrated her love for you by anointing your feet and drying them with her hair, show me what I can do to demonstrate my love. What gift can I give to you and to the world? How might I sacrifice myself and give my life more fully to you in response to your great loving sacrifice for me? Show me where I am holding back my love and restraining my offering. Amen.