

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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How do WE show your love to Jesus? How do YOU thank him for redeeming you?

If everyone were to answer one after the other, there would certainly be a colorful bouquet of ways in which you can show your love for Jesus: by singing hymns, through charity, through monetary donations, prayers, worshipping. And if we study and research the Gospels for further possibilities, this bouquet would become even larger and more colorful. Palm branches are among them, with which people waved to Jesus on the donkey. We should not forget all kinds of colorful garments that were laid on the dusty road entering Jerusalem. However, on the evening before his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus experienced a very special, special proof of love: a woman anointed his feet with very expensive, precious oil. Her name was Mary and she lived in Bethany with her sister Martha and her brother Lazarus.

Today I wanted to use the lens of Mary for the first time. As a firstborn, I was often more drawn to Martha. In this story however, the person of Judas also appealed to me. We usually associate him with something negative. He is "the traitor" the villain. But then I caught myself thinking we should have expected that someone would have a different opinion about an action like Mary's - as we had just heard in the gospel today. So, the thought arose:

What would it be like to bring both people - Mary and Judas - equally to life in a sermon?

Judas; How good it feels to be at home with Lazarus again today. Just lying at the table with friends. A Roman custom that not all Jews have adopted. But I confess - there is something comfortable about it. Lazarus is a good friend. I can still remember how sad I was when I heard about his death. I was even more impressed by the miracle of Jesus bringing him back to life. Lazarus is a good friend. He doesn't travel the country with Jesus like the rest of us. But whenever we are in Bethany, he invites us to visit him. It's a good thing he has his sister Martha. She does the household for him. It's hard to believe that we've been on the road for almost three years now. I'm very grateful that we can always stop off at Lazarus' house when we're in the area.

MARY: What a day it was! We started preparing for the visit of Jesus and his friends. Of course, Marta and I swept and mopped, shopped and cooked. When your best friends come, you do your best. The table was scrubbed, the dishes prepared for the men, the cushions fluffed up. Even Lazarus pitched in and helped us. Then Marta and I started cooking. Wonderful smells permeated our house and our mouths were watering. Lazarus kept coming by as if by chance and said he had to taste this and that to see if it was good enough. Since Jesus brought our brother back to life and made him healthy again, Marta and I simply can't refuse him anything. We are so happy to have him, every day is a celebration of life. And Marta, nothing escapes her attentive eye, at least nothing that concerns the household. And when Jesus is a guest - even more so. I'm not really into that, so I always

particularly enjoy Marta's cooking. My heart is filled with joy when I see Jesus and can listen to him. I love him more than I can say. And not just because of what happened to Lazarus. Jesus is such a special person.

I am convinced that there is no one else like him. Of course, we are all unique - but Jesus... With him, everything is completely different from the rest of us, I can't really put it into words. When he says or does something - it's always good and right, I can feel it. Even if not everyone always likes it. He surrounds himself with men - who are his closest friends and who follow him wherever he goes - who ..., well. I wouldn't have chosen them all. There's this Judas, for example. I've never liked seeing Judas cross the threshold of our house. There's something combative about him. I always have the feeling that he is challenging Jesus, provoking him, trying to push him in a certain direction. We all don't always understand Jesus, ask what he means, what he thinks. But Judas - he does it with such an undertone. As if he wanted to draw Jesus out of his reserve, push him. I ask myself, why is he like this? What moves him? What drives him?

Jesus - when he speaks to me, when he looks at me, then I know that he really means me! He doesn't see Lazarus' sister like others, he doesn't see a woman who should keep her mouth shut, who should get the next dish from the kitchen. He is not judging the woman who has made herself pretty. There is no reproach in his gaze that is directed at my life, nothing that he demands. There is only unadulterated love in his gaze, which means me as a person. He talks to me, asks questions, is interested in what I think. No other gaze makes me feel so safe, so accepted. And that's why what happened, I'm convinced of that.

JUDAS: So today I experienced something in Lazarus' house that was very strange. Well - no wonder - it has to do with Maria, Lazarus' other sister. She always struck me as something strange. The way she just sits down with us men and listens to Jesus... Not really at all common in our culture. But today she really took the cake! Just imagine: she simply poured an oil worth almost a day laborer's annual salary over Jesus' feet and anointed them with it.

But a whole pound? I just don't understand this woman. I was the first to point out what good could have been done with the proceeds of the ointment instead. Selling it and giving the money to the poor - what a public relations job that would have done for our Lord and his movement! But again, no one understood me. My goodness - we are heading for a triumphal procession! I can already see how enthusiastically the people of Jerusalem will welcome us tomorrow. My buddies have already informed me - everyone's hearts are flying towards Jesus. One word from him and the spark becomes a fire that sweeps the Romans out of the country. With the power of Jesus to raise the dead from the grave, what good things he could do for our poor, oppressed people. I would give everything for this one moment... Hm... I would give everything for this one moment... Mary also gave everything for this one moment of anointing... strange.

MARY: Why did I do that, give away the precious anointing oil? Of course, Judas, he had to grumble, he had to destroy the moment. Sure, he has the cash register and knows all about prices. But honestly, does he spend a lot of money from the till on the poor? Yes, Judas is right, a lot of good could have been done with the value of the oil. But haven't I also done good? The men were talking to Jesus at the table. There is something in the air, perplexity, uncertainty. And Jesus says things that once again none of us

really understand, but which make us uneasy. He talks about giving his life. I simply had to do that for him. Pour the anointing oil over his feet. Drying his feet with my hair. he does something for people, for us, for his friends, but also for strangers. He has healed so many, opened the eyes of so many. And I'm not just thinking of the blind, but of people who were transformed after a conversation or a meal with him. Who now knew what was important, who saw the world with new eyes, who turned to God again. This one time I was able to do something special for him. Jesus said "Leave her alone! She has kept it to anoint me with today for my burial." That shocked me to the core. But the fact that Jesus then spoke of an anointing as for a dead person - that shocked us all.

JUDAS: The longer I think about the strange event of Jesus' anointing by Mary, the more confused I am. How terrible that was: Jesus rebuked me in front of everyone! And not only that - he actually defended Mary! But the fact that he then also talked about death and burial makes me wonder: is he depressed? He's been talking so much about suffering, death and resurrection lately... has he not got over the Lazarus incident? And what does he mean by resurrection? I see him approaching his greatest triumphal procession! Mary is not the only one who loves Jesus as her Lord. I love him too! I left everything behind for him in my hometown of Karioth. Why is he so withdrawn into himself? I am very worried about him. Surely he will use his great divine power in Jerusalem, won't he? I am fighting for a united Israel and a strong kingdom. We have been waiting so long for a change in circumstances. I would do anything to get Jesus to show himself in power and glory. But - can it be that I have to force him to be happy?

Do I have to put him in a situation where he has no choice but to send his legions of angels into battle? Bamm - thoughts arise in me that I can barely control... What's wrong with me? I am the treasurer of the movement. I know how our finances are doing. The others call me a thief because I put money aside. But you must make provisions! Even if it's just to buy weapons. They're crazy expensive. What could have been done with the money for the Nardin oil.. and Mary just dumps it on Jesus' feet... that's decadent! In these times, when every denarius is needed to finance the fight against the Romans. I feel as if my thoughts are darkening, and another power is exercising control over me... I need to talk to Jesus about it. More and more often, a thought arises in me that confuses me. The Pharisees have power and use it. Jesus, who I think is much more powerful, uses it SO little. My cost-benefit analysis makes me wonder once again: do I perhaps have to put Jesus in a position where he can't help but finally do what he is there to do: use his power to save us all?

Yes, there are two sides to the story. Two different perspectives. But both, Judas and Maria - gave everything they can with their limited resources. Do we also always give Jesus what we can with our limited resources? Lent is exactly the time to think about this. So let's use this time to think about whether we always give Jesus what he deserves and what is possible for us to do.