

04.03.2022 John 12: 1 - 8

A dinner party with friends - everyone enjoys them and Jesus is no different. He was friends, good friends, with the sisters, Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus. He was no stranger in their house. Jesus enjoyed the quiet, the normalcy of their company because wherever he went, the crowds sought him as a teacher and a healer. In Bethany it was different. It is a relaxed time at the end of a busy day, to enjoy the comfort of their friendships. No it wasn't unusual for Jesus to break bread with this family, except Lazarus is there. The same Lazarus who had died not long ago. Dead. Buried. In the tomb for 4 days! Really dead! But there he was, in his own home, with his sisters serving the meal. The Lazarus at the table was no ghost. He was a beating heart and breathing lungs, flesh and blood after Jesus raised him from the dead. He, Jesus and the disciples reclined at table as dinner was served as if this was the way life ought to be lived. Nothing unusual here. No reason to look into the home where Jesus reclined at the table with disciples and Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead.

While it is unusual, so very unusual, is that Lazarus is present, it is not the most unusual moment in the evening. That moment came when Mary, as we heard, unwrapped her head scarf, her hijab is one word for this type of head covering, and let down her hair. This just wasn't done in public; it was an act solely assigned to the private moments of the family. Then massaging his feet with the pricey ointment, she wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair. This was an extremely intimate time between Mary, so filled with love for Jesus that she exposed herself to public shame, and Jesus the source of her gratitude. This moment was more powerful than the presence of Lazarus alive and in his own home days after his death. Imagine that!

There is so much going on here. The miracle of Lazarus. Cultural overlays. Political plots. Group dynamics. Individual personalities. Please don't miss the delicate tenderness of Mary. She doesn't speak, yet her actions proclaim her love. Adoration is my word to describe her attitude: she adores Jesus. She is in the love of Jesus. Not in love, but in the love of Jesus. Surrounded by his healing, comforting, loving Presence, she floats on the sea of her wonder and expresses her adoration. I imagine her adoration is like that delicate, tender moment when music lifts your soul. It happens to musicians when you play or sing. It happens to us, we who are carried away when we hear the music played or sung. No longer is it a performance; it is a moment of transport. We are in the music, surrounded by beauty, carried along by wonder; it is an experience of intimacy without a human counterpart. It can feel divine. If you know this intimacy, if you know this beauty, if you adore the music as you sing, as you play, as you listen, then you know Mary's adoration.

We should want to be enraptured by the love of Jesus in God's house; we should want to practice and play and sing and pray and serve so that we experience what Mary knows. We should want to receive in worship, in fellowship, in serving the moment when the veil between this life and the life that is promised grows thin, and unashamed, we adore God. In this it is our choice - to acknowledge how much we are loved, how deep and broad and beautiful is God's love for the world in Christ.

The future of Westminster Presbyterian Church is to adore Jesus Christ through music, worship, fellowship and service. Amen.