

Welcome

Announcements: *Giving options.* Special giving for April is UMCOR (video); *White Rose* on Altar in memory of Frances Whetten; *United Women in Faith* will be having a general meeting on Tuesday April 15 at 1PM open to **men and women**. The Sheriff's department will be doing a program on fraud prevention. How to prevent yourself from being scammed; All hands-on deck to help decorate for Easter Sunday, Saturday, April 19th at 9:30AM;

Holy Week Schedule-Maundy Thursday, April 17 at 6PM, Good Friday (Stations of the Cross by UMM) April 18 at 6PM, Sunrise Service, April 20th at 6AM, Easter Worship, Sunday April 20 at 9:30AM

Fellowship of Love Song

Call to Worship

L: When we have been hurt and lost,

P: God brings us laughter and joy.

L: When our lives reach a dead end,

P: God opens a way forward.

L: When the rivers of our lives dry up,

P: God sends living water to quench our thirst.

L: God sends living water to quench our thirst.

P: God has done great things for us!

L: Let us rejoice!

Unison Prayer

All: God of Love, you know our lives inside and out--the times of joy and laughter, and the times of pain and loss.

You accompanied our ancestors of faith into exile and then journeyed with them back to the Promised Land.

Jesus our sibling, you wept at the grave of Lazarus and then you celebrated at the dinner table with your resurrected friend.

Be with us in times of plenty and times of want, and let us rejoice in your presence, for you see us and care for us.

In the name of the Embracing Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Offering/Song

Scripture: John 12:1-8 NRSV

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him.

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said,

"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"

(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial.

You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Meditation: Compare and Contrast

What are you motivated by? Everyone is motivated by something. Most of us if or when we are asked that question we are first taken aback, then we usually scramble to say something that sounds good back. The reality is most people do not want to hear

what we are really motivated by. Jobs do not want to hear that you are motivated by money, nor do they want to hear that you are motivated by your family, we all know the sun rises and sets on our work and careers. Families do not want to know that you are motivated by not hearing them whine or complain, and spouses defiantly do not want to know that you are motivated by what they cook (or do not cook for that matter).

Motivations are tricky. Many of the things I have listed just now are not bad things to be motivated by, however they should not be the sole motivator. Most of the times listed go hand in hand with other parts. I do not want to hear my family complain, but I also like making my family happy. I really like money, but it is also important that I do something to help others. The list can go on, but I am sure you understand what I am saying.

This week we will be stepping out of the Gospel of Luke to venture into the Gospel of John. John is the odd ball of the gospels. The stories in Johns do not correlate with the other gospels, and they do not focus on proverbs or small sayings. Instead, John focuses on broad theological themes, themes that often force us to question our faith and our community. This is a product of the time in history when John took place. The church was experiencing growing pains as it was being forced out of the synagogue. This is why John rarely has anything good to say about Jewish religious practice. We do not need to dissect that more since our story today does not really focus on any of that, but it is always good to keep in mind.

The story today focuses on the beginning of the passion story. This is the story in John that sets the stage for the end. In the story one disciple, Mary, gets it, the other Judas does not. Mary understands, on some unexplainable level, that Jesus' time is almost up. Judas displays his greed and underhandedness, which we learn from the perspective of the author providing us with that insight. Our story starts after the resurrection of Lazarus, so we can understand Mary's gratefulness and willingness to spend an entire year's worth of wages on perfume.

Nard, the perfume used, was a burial perfume. It would not have been used as pure when preparing a body for burial. In fact, the extravagance of this gift is almost mind boggling. More than likely the perfume would have come from India and its fragrance was so strong that without a doubt Jesus would have still smelled it as he hung on the cross.

In contrast to Mary, who has an innate understanding of the mission and the ideal disciple in this passage, we have Judas, who expresses frustration at what he perceives as a waste. Again, the author tells us what is at stake. Judas is dipping into the bank account. I have seen this at churches. An extravagant gift is given to the church and everyone wants a piece. There was a church I served once that received over a million-dollar bequest. By the time I was there 4 years later it was all spent. There were people who no longer attended the church that said they stayed long enough to make sure the money was spent on pet mission and projects.

Judas responds and reacts so much that he says something, and Jesus responds with a confusing word. Jesus says, "You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." Which is John 12:8. This verse has been used by the church to downplay the poor, I mean they will always be there right? And to prioritize the poor because their need is always there. In reality, Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 15:7-11

"If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lend enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.'" (Deuteronomy 15:7-11 NRSV)

This is obviously more akin to the second way the church has understood this. That Jesus is reminding us that we are to continually care for the poor. However, I want to reel us back a little bit here because this is going down a rabbit hole that we do not need to go down.

Instead, I want to remind you I opened with a question, what motivates you? You see Mary was motivated by her love of Christ to give extravagantly. Judas was motivated by his love of money to hold and criticize. It is too simple to ask which one

you are or which one you are going to try to be. The reality is that we are both. Sometimes our motivations are good. We want to give to the church, to each other and help one another with nothing in return. And other times we want to control, to take, and dictate how gifts should be used.

Our calling from today's passage is not to see us in one camp or the other. But instead to think of what our motivations are. Why do we give to the church? I hope and pray it is because you believe in our ministries together, but you may just need a tax break. There is nothing wrong with either, however we need to understand ourselves if we want to grow to be more like Christ. So, I leave you with the question, what motivates you? Amen.

Katherine's Communion Liturgy

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: We lift them up to the Lord

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord Our God.

P: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

L: O God, you created the universe with a shout of joy, a word of delight, and a big bang. You made gravity holes and antimatter, swirling electrons and dancing quarks, shooting stars and sapphire blue planets.

You filled the ocean with clown fish and sharks, with dolphins and killer whales.

You filled the air with doves and hawks, songbirds and hummingbirds. You covered the land with shimmering aspen and weathered pine. And You blessed all the creatures of the earth:

The bugs, snakes, lizards, the lions, tigers and bears, the puppies and the hippos, the zebras and the penguins.

And You blessed all the children of the earth every shape and size, every color and complexion, every makeup and mood, every style and substance.
But we, O God, preferred to go our own way. We messed things up. We wanted to be in charge. We wanted to be in control.

We thought everything belonged to us. We polluted the environment. We destroyed each other.

We turned playgrounds into battlefields, school yards into mine fields, hospitals into death camps, and children into killers.

But God, you never gave up on us. You never walked away or walked out. You always honored your promises even when we broke ours.

You always welcomed us home with open arms and a warm heart even when our fists were clenched and our minds still closed.

When we walk through sorrow and chaos, You are with us. When we live through moments of war and acts of terror, You walk with us.

When our homes are destroyed, You help us to build new homes and finally lead us home to you.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise Your name and join their unending hymn:

**P: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory,
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

L: In the right time, in the fullness of your time, In the nick of time, you sent your Son to bring us back to life. He opened a window into your new creation.

HE showed us a vision of your way: where every child has enough to eat, and can sleep safely all through the night,

where every graveyard is a front porch of heaven, where the untouchable and unlovable are given the seats of honor, where tears of mourning become tears of laughter,

where grievous wrongs and horrid suffering are made right and fair, where children hunt Easter eggs on playgrounds made from battlefields, and where everyone is welcomed and loved.

L: In the dead ends of our lives,
Jesus clears a way ahead.

In the dead spots of our relationships, Jesus speaks words of hope and renewal. In the dead zones of our cities, Jesus calls forth a new kingdom.

L: When we are dead tired, Jesus picks us up and carries us to a place of rest. When we are dead wrong, Jesus confronts us with the truth.

When we are dead last, Jesus tells us that he has won us for eternal life.

And so on the night in which he gave himself up for us...

L: Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said,

"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

L: When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said,

"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

L: And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

P: Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

Message for Sunday, April 6, 2025

Title: Compare and Contrast

Scripture Reference John 12:1-8 NRSV

L: Pour out Your Holy spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by His blood.

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L: Renew our communion with all your saints, especially those who now live with you. Since you have refreshed our souls from the waters of life. Help us refresh and renew others. Since you have given us strength for the journey, Help us to strengthen others on their journey.

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P: Send your Spirit to renew our faith and transform our souls so that we may hear your music, work for justice, delight in heavenly food, and strengthen one another in love and grace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Holy Communion/Songs

Benediction

Goodbye