



26 March 2018

EXPECTING EASTER

John 12:1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, the man he had raised from death. 2 They prepared a dinner for him there, which Martha helped serve; Lazarus was one of those who were sitting at the table with Jesus. 3 Then Mary took a whole pint of a very expensive perfume made of pure nard, poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The sweet smell of the perfume filled the whole house. 4 One of Jesus' disciples, Judas Iscariot—the one who was going to betray him—said, 5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?" 6 He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag and would help himself from it. 7 But Jesus said, "Leave her alone! Let her keep what she has for the day of my burial. 8 You will always have poor people with you, but you will not always have me." 9 A large number of people heard that Jesus was in Bethany, so they went there, not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from death. 10 So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus too, 11 because on his account many Jews were rejecting them and believing in Jesus.

John, the theologian, wants his readers to discover a renewed Passover. He does this by using the stories of how different people reacted to Jesus. **Mary** breaks out her expensive perfume and allows its fragrance to express her appreciation for Jesus; **Judas'** concern for wastage prevents him from sharing in this loving action of Mary; **the Passover pilgrims** coming to Jerusalem for the Passover smell the perfume and come to satisfy their curiosity; and **the religious leaders** planned to "keep a lid" the religious experience.

Perhaps this is the story of Easter – some (*like Mary*) express their love for Jesus in unorthodox ways; some (*like Judas*) want Easter to be an opportunity to increase their money; some (*like the Pilgrims*) watch the religious rituals of Easter with curiosity; and some (*like the priests*) want to ensure that the beliefs and practices of Easter are firmly kept within their theological belief system.

What is your expectation of Easter? Is it possible that God could invite you into a new adventure – where, like Mary, you might have an unorthodox experience that will increase your love for him? What attitudes might you have to leave behind in order for this to happen? Might you – like Judas – need to take your eyes off the money for a while and look for Jesus instead? Perhaps you can stop following the Easter crowds to the shopping mall, and pause to find the fragrance of Jesus? Or maybe we all should pray that the Spirit of God blow some fragrant fresh air through our dusty theological expectations of Easter, and surprise us with something new.

For Thought:

<i>Your name is like ointment poured forth Your name is your character, your nature It's the way that you live, it's your behaviour Anything and everything you are is all wrapped up in that name And every name has a fragrance, a perfume</i>	<i>It's the thing that hits you when they walk into the room And Jesus if that person is You I will say I love the fragrance of Your name, O Lord I love the fragrance of Your name</i> "Fragrance" by Jon Thurlow
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Easter Sunday

Christ Lives

The Scripture passage for the day is drawn from Rueben Job and Norman Shawchuck, A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and other Servants, (Nashville, The Upper Room 1983), 142.

This reflection is from my own devotional exercises for the day. (Rev. Pete Grassow)