

## **Pastor Roy's Sermon from March 17, 2013**

Isaiah 43:16-21, Ps. 126, Phpp 3:4b-14, John 12:1-8

Children's sermon. WV Quarter. 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> grade w/fountain lines Water. Rivers in the desert. Abundant water to give drink to my people.]

Mary, Lazarath and Martha's sister, loved Jesus. As a brother, as a friend. Mary knew that Jesus was in danger as long as he was near Jerusalem. But he didn't let that get in the way of his teaching or visiting. So Mary wasn't going to let the expense of her gift get in the way of her expression of love. So she takes unimaginably expensive perfume and pours it on his feet and rubs it in with her hair. That's pretty expressive.

Do we live our lives more like Mary's response or like Judas' feigned concern for the poor?

Do we believe in Jesus? Are we willing to pour out whatever is dear to us for the sake of Jesus? Have we taken on his values? Do we know his freedom? Have we learned to be wasteful of our valuable, limited time, energy, and other resources for the sake of Jesus?

Discipleship is not an easy calling to follow—to say yes to one who freely gave his life away. Isn't it interesting that Christianity is the dominant religion in the West, and yet it is so difficult to practice! We hear the call to follow. We love the grace, yes, and if it weren't for that we would for the most part be lost because it's difficult to freely give our lives away.

Oh, sometimes it makes us feel good to help others, to be busy, to love and be loved, but sometimes we just want to keep some of it back for ourselves. We have a hard time with the sermon on the mount—the beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, love your enemies, be the salt of the earth, don't worry about your clothing, don't try to impress people, don't tell people when you do something noble.

Jesus takes all the fun out of being good. What? If you can't toot your own horn, what's the point in being decent? Well, I guess that is the point of discipleship. To learn true love, true righteousness, healthy forgiveness, authenticity and integrity.

Jesus taught it, but first, Jesus got it. Oh, he was definitely human—same struggles we have. But his circumstances—jealous, shallow religious leaders and jumpy Roman overlords, they pushed him to the edge and he chose the path of non-resistance. He turned the other cheek, and in the end, it made all the difference in the world. Jesus had integrity. He took his authentic living all the way to the cross and didn't back down.

That day, his followers learned the cost of discipleship. They learned to love. They learned to serve. They learned to give their lives away. They saw the ultimate extravagant gift. “Here, I give you my life. What will you do with it? Will you share your life with others? Even in ways and at times that you'd rather not?”

Mary saw it coming. It doesn't seem as though Peter did. It took such a painful lesson for him to learn to live this gospel message which Mary understood. She poured out her expensive gift for a momentary act of love. Peter and the other men and some of the women learned to give in expensive ways and live lives of service.

Do we follow like Mary followed? Do we love as she loved? Do we follow like Peter followed? Perplexed and baffled that Jesus didn't have more sense to stay out of trouble? What a waste! And he wouldn't even let us fight! Mary anoints, knowing in her gut that Jesus will die. But loving him all the same.

At first, Peter isn't quite sure he respects this man like he used to. "Jesus, what do we have to lose? We're all ready to die, anyway, like you said." So confused. So lost. He submits to death without resisting because he knows that his life is safely secured in God's vast goodness and limitless life. I'm sure Mary felt lost and confused too after he died—even though she had foreshadowed his coming death. Maybe they just had different ways of expressing their love for this one who loved so intensely and gave so much.

Even the late bloomer Paul learned to give it all up for a dying resurrected grace. Something worth living and dying for.

Let us ask ourselves, "Is my faith a faith of convenience or do I really love my neighbor?" This grace of God will never fail us, but a faith that always receives grace but rarely gets around to living it, is a poor faith indeed.

In this final week of Lent before the Holy Week of the passion of our Christ, let us strongly consider how we practice our faith—the faith which our Lord demonstrated courageously, and with great love and grace. A faith which preferred death to unfaithfulness to God and his friends. Let us look forward in our faith, the past is done, but we can struggle with all the saints to follow our Lord in a life of selfless service. It's a difficult path, but the Spirit guides us in it and will be faithful to lead us if we remain open and follow.