

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

April 6, 2025



PRUDENCE

and the desire to just keep saving

by Drew Downs

In John's gospel for this week, Mary uses an extraordinarily expensive perfumed oil to anoint Jesus in a touching moment of love and sacrifice. But a prudent voice raises a relatable concern over such wastefulness. How could we use that oil that way — we should've sold it and given the money to the poor. It is more effective — and theoretically aligned with our stated goals of helping people. We hear this all of the time in church, especially around stewardship.

Once again, the prudent expectations many of us were raised on are subverted by Jesus. It is a delicious irony that people will quote Judas to reject generosity, much like we find ourselves siding with Martha in the kitchen or that parable's laborers who expect to be paid more for arriving early. There are things and ways we think are inherently *good*, which isn't to say they aren't, but when they don't align with Jesus, we might find ourselves on the wrong side of things.

LENT

2025

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Preparing for Holy Week

We have one more week in the Lenten season before we arrive at Holy Week, which is the most intense week in the church's calendar. And this is the annual reminder that God asks us to devote one day every week for Sabbath, therefore, the least we can do is offer one week of the year to special devotion.

I like to read through Jesus's last week in the gospel for the year, which this year is Luke. A reading plan might look like this:

- Sunday — Luke 19:28-40
- Monday — Luke 19:41-48
- Tuesday — Luke 20-21
- Wednesday — Luke 22:1-6
- Thursday — Luke 22:7-38
- Friday — Luke 22:39-23:56a
- Saturday — Luke 23:56b
- Sunday — Luke 24:1-12

Pray along with the Stations of the Cross in-person or online here:

<https://youtu.be/Ldhp7mKh7fg?si=zMAh4a3zhoUnCf7M>

And join us for services:

- Palm Sunday (4/13) @10:00 only (no 8:00 service)
- Maundy Thursday (4/17) @6:00 pm (with footwashing)
- Good Friday (4/18) @noon
- The Great Vigil (4/19) @8:00 pm
- Easter (4/20) @8:00 and 10:00 am

With love,
Drew+

LENT

2025

FOR SUNDAY

Lent 5C

April 6, 2025

Collect

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

John 12:1-8

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."

LENT

Reflection

When Martha and Mary come to Jesus to save their brother (and Jesus's friend), Lazarus, they appeal to his sense of urgency, his personal relationship, his willingness to protect others. And when Judas dies, their shock and sadness is colored by this belief about Jesus. That he should want to save his buddy from dying.

The turn in the story comes when Jesus subverts this desire to protect by revealing a whole *other* option. He raises Lazarus from the dead before the grieving and dumbstruck sisters and friends. Saving, it would seem, is not the only choice; raising is on the table, too.

There is a temptation to treat Jesus as these sisters do: to want Jesus to be a miracle-worker who particularly works miracles for us. Save my brother or myself. Heal the whole world. Considering Jesus *is* a miracle-worker, this isn't a bad calculation on anyone's part. He does fit the part. But there's a difference between rightly assessing who Jesus is and then assuming his miracle-working is to one's personal benefit. That none of us would have to face death or rejection, struggle, or live separated from the ones we love.

The raising of Lazarus reveals, not the virtue of Jesus, but the power of God. And it serves as a precursor to the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is why Mary is at the feet of Jesus, after participating in an act of burial for Jesus in the days after burying her brother and yet getting him back. In burials we live with both celebration and grief. It is a time of thanksgiving for God's offering of life and in sadness that we don't get to live forever with one another.

Judas doesn't get this yet. And some Pharisees will conspire to kill Lazarus — the proof of resurrection. But we are called to live in the both/and of this moment. We celebrate knowing the grief to come.

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