

WELCOME 6th April 2025 – 5th SUNDAY IN LENT '25 C

John 12:1-11

Welcome! What a blessing to be together again today! With your worship order you have in your hands *Bible Study Qs/Growing Praise* handouts... Those are provided to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.**

As we move into this week...

It was the best of times it was the worst of times... The well-known first line of Charles Dickens' classic novel, **A Tale of Two Cities**.

As we gather today with Jesus & his followers in the days leading toward his crucifixion & resurrection, we get to eavesdrop on another "tale." It's not a tale of "cities" or even "Kingdoms," but of devotion... It's a tale of three devotions.

3 different kinds of dedication/commitment/adoration - DEVOTION come into focus here. One ends in death. One is endless in abundant life & victory over every foe. One is so whole-heartedly absorbed into the One who promises life in all its fullness & love unsurpassed that it surrenders fully against all reason, rationality, or rejection.

Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

This then becomes *OUR* call & *OUR* challenge... to surrender all we are, all we do, & all we have into the promise of life in its fullest in Jesus & devote our entire lives to his will & way in this world... to become whole-heartedly absorbed into Jesus... One with Him as He is One with the Father... whole-heartedly devoted to him.

In a world of indifference,
Jesus calls for our whole-hearted devotion.

Let's pray... then explore & experience that together...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Living God, in your presence there is fullness of life and love. Draw us deeper into the life of your Son day by day that the fullness of his love may flow out of our lives to others. Capture our hearts & lives so fully that we are faithful agents of your Kingdom of grace... We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ who stretched out his life for all. Amen.

LET'S HEAR GOD'S WORD...

FAITH CHAT:

1. If you had a year's wages & the freedom to make a gift, what gift would you make?
2. How would you like to spend the last days before your own death?

Prayer after the sermon...

**"Lord God, I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.
Put me to doing. Put me to suffering.
Employ me or lay me aside according to your purpose.
Exalt me or humble me according to your will.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have none.
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
Amen."**

5th SUNDAY IN LENT '25 C – WHOLE-HEARTED DEVOTION

American writer, David Foster Wallace once said: "...in the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. **Everybody worships**. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship...is that **pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive**. If you worship money & things...if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body & beauty & sexual allure & you will always feel ugly. Then when time & age start to show, you will die a million times before they finally grieve you." Wallace was **NOT** a follower of Jesus...but he knew about the devouring nature of other gods. He suffered depression & other mental health disorders for most of his life...became famous for his writing & infamous for how he treated the people in his life.

Ultimately...took his own life. *anything else you worship will eat you alive*

Our GP today repeats something I've quoted often. "**Man**, so long as he remains free, has no more constant & agonizing anxiety than to find as quickly as possible someone to worship." Woven into the fabric of the universe is the understanding or sense that we are small against the backdrop of something bigger & human life becomes a pursuit of that "bigger something." As humans we instinctively 'get it' that there is something more than this life & that draws us out to place our trust, our devotion, our allegiance, our hope, our future in some person or thing & give **THAT** our all. Everybody worships. Something **ALWAYS** receives our devotion. But the root of human sin is that most human devotion is directed toward what we get in return. We devote ourselves to that which promises payback. We devote ourselves to someone or something hoping that one day because of them we'll hit the jackpot. *Which means...*

Most human devotion is a transaction: I do this to get that. (devote to my job to get a house/big super/promoted... Devote/Support team/party to get boast/joy when they win. Devote to my kids so that they have it better than I did as a child/look after me when I'm old/be happy. Eventually those things eat us alive – disappoint) I've worked closely w/ pastors who almost killed themselves devoted to ministry to prove to their dads they were just as good as their more "successful" siblings. Human beings from the 1st bite from the tree in the garden turned their devotion/allegiance/passion/worship/"hearts desire" toward what we **GET** from the object of our devotion.

As John lets us into a dinner near the end of Jesus' life...we see something similar at the table w/ Jesus. I'm going to start w/ Judas because I think he resonates w/ 21st century living...I look at Judas & he just **IS** many of the not-yet-Xns I know.

We know the story of this dinner...starts Jn 11...**A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary & Martha...So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, your dear friend is very sick."** We know...Jesus does not dash off to save his friend; he waits & arrives only after Laz has been in the tomb 4 days. His sickness goes unchecked & death comes. But Jesus calls Laz back from death & to this family entrusts his identity: **"I am the resurrection & the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, & everyone who lives & believes in me will never die."**

Glimpse what is to come - No one else is privy to that promise... M/M/L host a "dinner" for Jesus...planned specifically to honour Jesus & thank him for the miracle of overwhelming grace that restored Laz to life. **Then** Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, & she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance. I'll say more about Mary in a bit **But** Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, "That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold & the money given to the poor." Not that he cared for the poor — he was a thief, & since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself. Regardless of Judas' motives or what he might have done w/ the \$\$\$...2 things...**1st** I understand his question. "A year's wages" is a tidy sum that was likely 20 years' of savings. To pour it all out at one time on one person on their **FEET** doesn't make sense. It's neither practical nor efficient. I understand his question. **But 2nd** What kind of question is **that** in **THIS** moment?!? He is sitting across the table drinking wine & eating lamb chops w/ Laz... 4 days dead & raised to life by Jesus who just happens to be the guest of honour at the end of the table. Talk about a guy w/ no sense of timing...can't read the room. *Judas! Really?!? We ALL know folks JUST LIKE THAT.*

He's speculating on perfume futures in the share market when he could throw a biscuit & hit a guy who's been called out of his grave **AND** the guy who raised **him** as well as others & walked on water & multiplied a lunch into a feast for 1000s (2x) & cast out demons & healed a guy born blind & another who was crippled for a lifetime & he's asking about the cost of the "thank you" gift. I look at Judas & he just **IS** many of the not-yet-Xns I know...indifferent to the wonder & mystery & majesty right b¹/₄ his eyes & focussed solely on some self-invested pet peeve. He betrays an indifference to everything he's seen & experienced in Jesus' presence. He can estimate the price of a commodity but he is *completely indifferent* to the value of love...indifferent to God in the flesh passing the bread rolls. Practicality, efficiency, expediency, common sensibility & self-interest are all enemies of love – those are all a threat to the whole-hearted single-minded devotion to Jesus Mary displays...

I promise I'll get to her...

Maximilian Kolbe **was** a Polish Roman Catholic Priest imprisoned @ Auschwitz for helping Jews evade the Nazis. One day a Jewish inmate escaped but recaptured & returned to Auschwitz for execution. Kolbe traded his life for that of the escapee. He died so the other would live. During the lead up to the War Kolbe was shaken by the many inside **BOTH** the church & world gov'ts who ignored the clear signs of the genocidal intent of Hitler & the National Socialists gaining greater & greater power in Germany. When Western Europe & US Pres Franklin Roosevelt turned blind eyes to the threat to the Jews/world he **said**, "Indifference is the greatest sin of the 20th century". It has always been so. Indifference to the relationship of love God desires... *Rom 1:21ff*

But while Judas launches his critique from inside the party, remember, not everyone who sees Laz walking down the street is excited to see him. The leading priests & Jewish High Council know raised-from-death Laz is a threat so they call a mtg: **So** from that time on, the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus' death. As a result, Jesus stopped his public ministry among the people & left Jerusalem... Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus, too, for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them & believed in Jesus. *Jn 11:53 & 12:11* They too are indifferent to the wonder & mystery & majesty right ^{b/4} their eyes & focussed solely on some self-invested pet peeve. The Law or their position/power... Judas' self-devotion, his indifference to anything but his own interests, ultimately betrays him as surely as he betrays Jesus. The "thief" who would dip his hand into their common purse would cast his 30 pieces of silver back at the feet of the Jewish High Councillors & die by his own hand... pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. *IT'S TRUE.*

Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." The next chapter of John's biography/gospel of Jesus begins like this: **Before** the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world & return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, & now he loved them to the very end. - *Jn 13:1* Jesus lives an eternal devotion to us... *She did this in preparation for my burial... he loved them to the very end.* There is no question... Jesus came for this purpose ...to die as a ransom...to be the restorer of the relationship ^{b/4} God & sinful humans ...to stand in our place & absorb the full weight of our sin & it's deserved wrath & punishment...to be raised again in victory so we then would share his life beyond the grave & inherit his glory as beloved children of the Father...to grant living access to the Father's love, provision, protection, healing, hope & peace.

Jesus lives an eternal devotion to us... **Even** before he made the world, God loved us & chose us in Christ to be holy & without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. - *Eph 1:4-5* Judas' self-

devotion – his indifference to anything but his own interests ends in despair, death & desolation. Jesus' devotion to us in completing the Father's will to rescue & restore us to him is a living victory that is ^{w/o} end & transforms everything about us & this world. Surrounded by the threat of death Jesus is unflinching & unflinching in his devotion to us...to save/recreate us according to the Father's will.

But Mary...in response to having seen right now what God in Jesus will do in the time to come – in response to seeing life in Christ triumph over death – in response to being loved such that even death cannot overcome it - in response to having been given hope larger than the grave... Mary bets the future on Jesus... She commits her whole existence to him. Mary lives not for "what might I get from my whole-hearted devotion," but for "what have I been given for which I am wholeheartedly grateful." Mary knows...enduring life-giving devotion is focussed on Jesus... 6X NT shows us people who find their greatest joy at the feet of Jesus... in humble adoration, submission, devotion under the blessing, love, smile & protection of the One who wants to hold us close. In the face of life transformed by grace now & knowing life abundant in grace is coming Mary **says**, "Jesus you can have all of me now & forever."

Here's the deal... Jesus holds nothing back from you... in life in death & in the fullness of his rule over all things... he pours out love life forgiveness healing hope peace & joy... There is no greater gift you can give back to God, than to pour out your life in devotion to the One who poured out his own life for you. There is nothing more sweet-smelling than to love relentlessly in the way Christ loves, to be extravagant in generosity as God has been generous to you, uncontrolled in showing gratitude & excessive in celebrating the life you have received.

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As you leave today, be specific & share ^{w/} your neighbour...

TAKE IT HOME

How will Christ's eternal devotion to you be seen in your devotion to him this week?

(Be specific...How will this take shape in you?)

Let's pray together... **(On the front page)**