



Grain

"Only the wealthy need to fast. The poor do it as a way of living." - Anonymous

Submitted by Rev. Peter Heide, Boscobel

Field

3 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. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples... said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"...7 Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. 8 You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." John 12

Thoughts by Reverend Peter Heide, Interim Pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Boscobel

"You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." How often have we heard this story? Should the nard have been sold? In my pastoral duties, when speaking about poverty, people at times have said, "Well pastor, you know the poor will always be with us; even Jesus says so." Until a few years ago, I was nonplussed by such comments. Then I thought about the gift-giving practices I experienced in Israel. Instead of haggling for some chocolate with one of the begging children I met on the street, I offered him a handful of pencils. I wasn't really interested in his chocolate. I thought that the gift of the pencils would make him go away. Instead, he handed me a handful of chocolate bars. In a world where gifts received require an equal or greater gift in return, this young boy responded as he had been taught. I had more chocolate bars than I knew what to do with for the price of six or seven pencils. I was embarrassed.

In the Gospel text, Jesus gives a gift that is greater than the gift of costly nard he receives. He gives the gift of the poor as an equal or greater gift to those who can afford the cost of the nard. As Jesus is anointed in preparation for his death and resurrection, Jesus gives us the opportunity to anoint the socially dead of our world raising them up into new life in Christ.

We may not have the physicality of Jesus with us today, but his gift continues to exceed and overflow the bounds of our imagination. As we remember the extravagant gift of nard, let us also remember the extravagant gift Jesus gives to us. The poor you will always have with you. Are we prepared to give an equal or greater gift in response?

Many thanks to Rev. Peter Heide for his thoughts! Happy Monday!

Prayer

Highly recommended

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy