



Grain

“There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.” Deut. 15:11

Field

¹2Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary 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. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii 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 kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” John 12:108

Thoughts

Several years ago, when sitting in a bookstore in Minneapolis I suddenly had an unexpected sense of dread. It was actually overpowering. Where did that come from? The feeling stuck. Within minutes of leaving the store I was in a car accident that was unavoidable. Coincidence? It didn’t seem like it, but the experience was certainly isolated. I’m embarrassingly not always sensitive to my surroundings let alone prone to having premonitions. But there are stories of people who have a tendency to sense when something negative will occur. Is it God working? Perhaps sometimes thoughts bud into consciousness after our brains subconsciously process complex realities. In Germany, there are reports of people having nightmares for months before it was clear that the Nazis would take control.

The Gospel story is set just days before Jesus would die on the cross. His followers had heard Jesus talk about his pending death, though, from what we can gather, probably not in detail. Still, they knew how his teachings and actions conflicted with the empire and those complicit with it. What did Mary sense beyond what she knew intellectually? What nightmares did she have? But it wasn’t only dread Mary felt. She was overwhelmed with love that was as thick as the scent of perfume she rubbed on Jesus’ feet.

Death was in the air and so were beautiful smells. In response, did Judas only sniff odorless money? I want him to turn out to be like the Prodigal Son or the thief who received Jesus forgiveness on the cross, but we can’t get too caught up in that. We ourselves always need to return to God after feigning concern about others for our own purposes or when being influenced by hijacked responses to what Jesus said about the poor.

Return to God’s extravagant love from which the dread of anything negative cannot separate us, and out of which our care for those closest to us and our neighbors flow. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy