

**John 12:1-11**

**February 26 & 27, 2023**

**Ash Wednesday/Lent 1**

It must have been the talk of the town. Jesus was coming to dinner. But this going to be no ordinary dinner. Jesus had gone to many dinners before this one. In fact, it was at a wedding dinner that Jesus had done his first miracle when he changed water into wine. Some of the dinners that he had been at served 5,000 people or 4,000 people; some had been very small with just a few people. No doubt there were many more dinners that Jesus had gone that are not recorded in the pages of Scripture. At this dinner, Jesus was only about a week from walking to the cross. Every step he took in this last week, they were taken with a purpose in mind. During this Lent season, we will be taking a look at the final steps that Jesus as he walks to the cross on Calvary. We begin our walk with Jesus.

Matthew writes in his account of this dinner: **“Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper.”** Did you catch it? The home of Simon the Leper. Israel’s laws were absolute and strictly enforced. No person with leprosy would not have been allowed live in his own home or with his family. A person with this disease was completely ostracized from society. If anyone would try to come near a person who was infected, they had to shout: *“unclean, unclean”* if they met someone along the road. The only way that Simon would have been able to have this dinner party, he must have been healed of Leprosy. Very possibly, Jesus must have been the one who healed him. This dinner party hosted by Simon may have been a thank you to the Savior who gave him his life back.

Normally, this would have made Simon somewhat of a celebrity. But he was the only one who was at the center of attention at this dinner. John writes: **“Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.”** John makes it clear that **“Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.”** Look at the picture of this dinner party – hosted by a man healed of Leprosy. Martha was there being the caterer of the dinner. Mary was there hanging on every word that Jesus spoke. Lazarus was there who had been dead for 4 days and was brought back to life. It's no wonder that a **“large crowd of Jews”** when they **“found out that Jesus was there.”**

Can you imagine the conversations that were happening at that dinner. *“So, Simon, what was it like to have been healed? Did you have any sores that were healed up with no scars? Did you have any parts of your hands that were near falling off, then were restored?”* Then there was Lazarus. Everyone wanted to talk to Lazarus. *“So, what was it like to be dead for four days? Did you see any bright light? Did you have a bad heart? How is it feeling? Do you have any lingering health problems? Do you feel better than before?”*

No doubt Lazarus was THE center of attention that night at this dinner. His being raised from the dead, was being noticed by the Jewish leaders. It was beginning to move people to trust in Jesus even more. **“So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.”** This was the straw that broke the camel’s back for them. Jesus had crossed a *“red line,”* and he needed to be stopped. The guests at this dinner party celebrated Jesus’ limitless power.

Not only had them seen the results of Jesus’ power, but they were looking at the one who had the power. They trusted Jesus even more. They saw what happens when one completely trusts in Jesus. This dinner party sheds a new light on the words that are spoken by Jesus in the chapter before our text as Jesus is about to raise Lazarus from the dead. **“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”** (John 11:25-26) These words of Jesus changes everything.

I wonder how Simon felt after he had contracted leprosy? I wonder how Lazarus felt as he could feel life leaving him as he got closer to death and Jesus wasn’t coming? How about us. Ever felt like Jesus isn’t there for you? Ever ask Jesus the “why” question? What about those moments when we fall prey to doubt, to gloom-and-doom pessimism, to worry about our future? Then maybe we need to walk these final steps with Jesus to a dinner party. We need to see the limitless power that God has. We need to trust him. There we will see how much Jesus loves us as we look at the sacrifice, he is going to make for us.

This dinner celebration was more than just a celebration about the power of Jesus. This dinner celebration also was a statement about the sacrifice that this limitless Jesus was about to do in a week. Today, we see Jesus in the house of Simon the Leper. Yet, we also see three people that Jesus had spent a lot of time with – Mary, Martha and Lazarus. A family that he had become close to. I believe that it was Mary who had paid close attention to the words of Jesus over the years. She had put two and two together. Mary seemed to know that Jesus was taking his final steps to the cross. So, Mary stepped out in faith. John writes: **“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”** This was some seriously expensive perfume. It would cost someone nearly a year’s worth of wages for this jar. Not only was the perfume itself expensive, the jar was also expensive. Mark tells us in his account: **“She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.”** There was no turning back now. John tells us: **“She poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair.”** There was plenty of nard, and she planned to use it all. One of the purposes of nard was to place it on a body as it was buried. It’s smell was unique and covered up the smell of decaying flesh.

Even the disciples hadn’t put two and two together yet. John describes Judas’ reaction. Matthew and Mark tell us that even the rest of the disciples said, **“why this waste of perfume?”** Yet, Mary she knew what we need to know. They were witnessing Jesus’ final steps. He would soon be making the sacrifice for sin by his death. Soon Jesus would be wrapped in linen strips along with spices. Everything was happening just as the Father had planned. A week later, it would all be over. The problem of sin would be fixed. So, let us walk with Jesus in every step. Let’s make the journey to the grave but also to the resurrection. May we celebrate that we are all invited to the heavenly banquet in heaven. Amen.