

A 2014 Matthew 26:6-56 (etc.)
14-04-13 Palm/Passion Sunday

God's beloved people, grace and peace to you in the name of our crucified and risen Savior,
Jesus Christ.....Amen.....

As Matthew tells the story of Jesus' Passion: "passion" is the name given to the events of Jesus' death and resurrection,... as Matthew relates his story, Jesus is drawing close to death, and the only one who seems to grasp what's really happening is the unnamed woman with the alabaster jar of ointment. The disciples are confused, and the religious authorities are afraid.

But She comes into the dinner party, approaches Jesus, and anoints his head with oil. The disciples in their confusion get angry about the cost of the oil - 75 pieces of silver. That money could have gone to the poor.... always a good religious answer in a fight about money. But Jesus notices her and praises her,... this unnamed woman,... she has prepared him for burial, and her story must be told.

So today we tell it. Amidst the triumphal entry into Jerusalem with palms strewn,... the last supper, betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion – we celebrate this woman's clarity and gift to Jesus.

We must tell her story. Her witness must not be lost because she is our lone guide through this whole terrible ordeal. Everyone else either betrays, runs away, spectates, or supports Jesus' death. But this unnamed woman serves as Jesus' pastor, priest, and prophet.

By anointing, she has given Jesus his last rights, and as a prophet she anointed the head of a new king who will rule from the cross. She alone does what no one else in their confusion and grief can see to do. Judas betrays Jesus for only 30 pieces of silver. Less than half of what the anointing oil was worth. The disciples all flee, and the inner circle falls asleep when Jesus goes to pray....

We see ourselves all over in this story of Jesus' last days. We get confused about Jesus. We betray and deny Jesus for much less than 30 pieces of silver. We lie, we hurt our neighbor, we ignore people, and sometimes we even selfishly cause harm and pain on purpose instead of seeking to care for those around us....

But sometimes, sometimes we catch a glimpse of God and his kingdom, and we cover Jesus in our prayers of thanks... and with gifts of time for others... and money for ministry. Sometimes we join with the woman in celebrating Jesus.

And Jesus.... he's there with you in all of it. Jesus is with you to comfort and forgive when you have pulled a Judas – a really big, naughty sin.... And Jesus is with you to comfort and forgive when you fall asleep and miss a chance to share his love with someone.... And Jesus is with you when you're trying to flee from him or those around you.... Jesus is with you, body and blood outpoured, to forgive and to love you... to save you. Jesus saving you,... and having the sole right to proclaim his love for you... is what the next days are all about. This week is all about him.... and how he loves you.

Amen.....