

SERMON
04-06-2025
John 12:1-8

I am reading Marianne Edgar Budde's new book, *How We Learn to be Brave, Decisive Moments in Life and Faith*. In it, she writes, "We all want to be brave when it counts—to be the one who steps up, leans in, and does the right thing when it matters most. We want to bring our best selves when we're called upon, to speak with clarity and conviction in a pivotal situation. Decisive moments are marking events. They stand out in our memory and are what others often remember about us. (p. xv)

This scene into which John takes us today is such a moment – a moment when decisive actions speak to the clarity of conviction.

These are not the last acts of Jesus, Mary, Martha, or Judas. But what transpires in this home, and between this group of people is how we will best remember them. The actions that take place will be their defining actions.

It is six days before Passover we are told. Jesus is in Bethany, at the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Lazarus who once was dead to them has been returned to his family. It is Lazarus's last action to show that Jesus has the power to give us new life Jesus is the way of New Life.

Martha has served a meal to all those who have been welcomed into their home. It is Martha who will solidify in our minds the joy that emerges with service to God. Martha shows us the way to steep our life choices and right actions into the service of Jesus' ministry.

Mary, our spiritual sister pours out a generous offering of costly perfume made of pure nard, and anoints Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair. We read that The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. It is Mary who makes herself vulnerable before Jesus. In the intimate act of anointing Jesus, she acknowledges not only that she loves him but that she knows that Jesus will die. She attests that she will remain with him throughout his ordeal. In her actions of mingling her perfumed hair at his feet, she professes that she will humble herself before the pain and suffering that is to come.

Jesus, by his presence in this home and by his actions, is saying, Yes this is right and good. All that is taking place is right and good. This is the way of the Kingdom of God.

John our gospel writer records how this sacred moment is disrupted by the words and actions of Judas Iscariot. Lest we forget who Judas is, John reminds us that he is one of Jesus' disciples (and the one who was about to betray him). This is not the last act of Judas, but knowing what is to come, John identifies this man here for the broken soul that he is. "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" Ask Judas. And parenthetically, John tells us that Judas 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.)

We have a choice when we hear this story. We have a choice as to where we focus our attention. And I think this is really important. Because it reminds us that we have a choice in life, as to where we focus our attention.

In this story, we are cruising along very nicely. Lazarus has been raised from the dead; he's even sitting at the dinner table sharing a meal with his family. Martha, sweet reliable Martha has prepared a meal for everyone to enjoy. Mary has purchased a lovely perfume that is setting the mood of love and adoration. Jesus is present. So, God is in the house. The space is sacred, solid, and strong.

How Judas finds his way into this free meal is unclear but he's there. We can assume that all the disciples who were available for the dinner party were there too. But they are behaving themselves and so they don't get a mention.

Who does get mentioned? The awful bad boy. Because he stands up and says something so egregious that he cannot be ignored. He is the voice of greed and envy. His words are anything but true. And he uses the poverty and misfortune of others to disguise his deceit.

We can choose to focus on Judas and the misery he spews forth onto everyone. We can dwell in this ugly place he takes us to. We can remain anxious and fearful of what the Judas' of this world have done and will do.

Or we can acknowledge this evil for what it is. And we can turn our focus back to the way of Jesus. Jesus says, I am here. I am with you now. Stay with me. I have so much more to offer you. Yes, there are the Judas in this world. There always have been. And yes perhaps there will be for a while anyway. But they are not the keepers of joy, of love, of endurance, or peace. Focus on the sacred one, focus on our sacred call to be disciples of Love, mercy, and forgiveness. We are called in the face of all Judas to be disciples of Love, mercy, and forgiveness.

Marianne Budde writes, "How we prepare for decisive moments determines our ability to step up to them when they come, and how we live in light of our decisive moments is, in the end, what determines their significance. (xvi)

In the face of Judas, we stand boldly, we stand with love, and we do the next beautiful thing.

When we live with Jesus, in the way of the Jesus ministry, there is no scarcity of love, of courage, of the presence of God, or forgiveness for our prodigal journeys. There is no scarcity of Goodness in the children of God.

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday. I have found some really interesting words of wisdom about Hope. In listening to some workshops out of the CoE, St. Martin in the Field, London I have been exposed to some different ways of understanding and experiencing Hope. It was very hard to wait until

next week to share them with you. So, it will be my pleasure to see you next Sunday. I look forward to sharing some profound words of Jesus-inspired wisdom.

Today, let us pray that we may be filled with the Spirit of a miraculous God. A God who sees the goodness in his beloved he has created. A God who likes us for who we are and God who loves us enough to help us change.

And may we in all places and at all times, speak and act in the way of a loving and just God.

Amen