

Worship Engagement and Devotion for week of April 3, 2022

READ : [John 12:1-8, Isaiah 43:16-21](#)

Full to the Brim, An Expansive Lent Week 5: Brazen Acts of Beauty



Lent is a six-week journey that takes us to Holy Week and Easter. It is a season for renewing our faith. This year, our Lent worship and devotional material focuses on the theme “Full to the Brim”. The scriptures in Lent overflow with images and narratives that remind us of God’s abundant love, grace, and forgiveness. The invitation is simply that we will receive this gift that is so great it cannot be contained. We are like vessels placed in a running stream. The cool, clear waters of God’s love fill us to the brim and wash over us. Our Lent theme invites us to explore abundant, expansive grace. The Bible is brimming with the gospel of grace and so during Lent we are invited into a full life, a radically different life. We are invited to be who we are, to counter scarcity and injustice, and to spread love lavishly.

God is brazen in turning tears into joy. Not so long after their brother Lazarus dies and is raised from the dead, Mary and Martha joyfully welcome Jesus into their home. Mary pours out fragrant perfume (perhaps originally intended to anoint her brother’s body after death) and it fills the whole room. This is a brazen act of beauty. Beauty is resistance to death; beauty is an act of love. Her anointing of Jesus’ feet is also a public act of worship. Her faith does not hide; it is not frugal. It is embodied, broken open, and poured out. This isn’t a frugal faith—it is an abundant, extravagant faith. Mary’s act is also risky—she puts her full body into it, sort of like a protest. She exhibits a shameless and brazen faith.



Questions for Reflection:

- In her artist statement for “*Brazen Beauty*,” Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity writes (about Mary): “The vessel she holds is lined with gold, a reference to the ancient Japanese practice of Kintsugi, of repairing broken pottery with gold lacquer. The art of Kintsugi embellishes the cracks and transforms a shattered vessel into a new object of beauty. In this embodied act of worship, Mary is practicing Kintsugi—boldly celebrating the beauty of life even as death approaches.” Where is God practicing Kintsugi in the life of your community, filling fissures with gold?
- How do you define beauty? What is the role of beauty in your faith? What are some real-life examples of beauty as resistance, beauty as worship, or beauty as an act of love?
- Mary’s actions could have been defined as wasteful, sexual, shameful, or inappropriate, but Jesus affirms and praises what she does because it is an act of love. In fact, he will soon mirror Mary’s actions on the night before his arrest when he washes his disciples’ feet. When have you witnessed or received an act of love that could be dismissed as excessive or inappropriate?

Adapted from SANCTIFIED ART FULL TO THE BRIM SERMON PLANNING GUIDE

Spiritual Practice: Generosity

Practice the spiritual discipline of generosity by *committing to five acts of extraordinary generosity over the next month*. Consider other ways the practice of generosity can become part of the regular rhythm of your life. Giving is an act of worship and Christian discipleship that reflects our love for and faithfulness to God. In what ways does Mary’s act of abundant, extravagant faith inspire your generosity?

The Spiritual Practice of stewardship includes:

- Adopting an intentionally generous lifestyle flowing from love of God and others
- Being liberated from greed, self-centeredness, money, etc so that the generous spirit of Jesus grows in you
- Living in a way that exemplifies that your life, your time, your money, your home, your family are not your own
- Living as a steward in all areas of your life; stewardship of your character, the environment, etc
- Thoughtfully investing resources and spiritual gifts to benefit the body of Christ
- Generously sharing the resources God has given you: physical, mental, natural, economic, and spiritual
- Becoming more aware of the ways we may act selfishly and portray a lack of love for others
- Modeling God’s goodness and generosity; Embracing generous hospitality toward those in need
- Making offerings that go beyond the tithe
- Cultivating generosity by being generous with your time, money, praise/encouragement, belongings and knowledge - <https://www.umc.org/en/content/cultivating-generosity>
- Investing in the kingdom of God, building up treasures in heaven
- Loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself
- Experiencing a life in Christ that makes us generous in every way with our kindness, compassion and love made evident in the ways we use our time, resources and money.

Adapted from *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun