April 3/22

Jesus appears to have made the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus his headquarters during his last visit to Jerusalem for the celebration of Passover. There the Bethany family gave a dinner party for Jesus. Martha and Mary played their customary roles. Mary’s anointing of Jesus’s feet and wiping them with her hair was a most astonishing display of affection and devotion, considered immoral in those times. In Christ’s day, people did not sit at a table to eat their meals. The tables they used were close to the floor, and the people reclined around the table at mealtime. Their heads were near the table while their feet were further away. Thus, Mary would have assumed a kneeling position near Jesus to anoint His head and His feet with the ointment. By kneeling to Him and anointing Him, she was declaring her faith in Him as the Messiah.

The nard was produced from a rare plant that grew in India. It was hard to acquire and was very expensive. People saved for many years to just be able to provide enough ointment or their own funeral. In today’s terms, it would be worth fifteen to twenty thousand dollars. The breaking of the box exhibited two eastern customs. When a distinguished person ate in a home, often the glass they had used was broken to prevent a lesser person from using it in the future. After the body of the deceased had been washed and anointed, the box that contained the embalming spices was broken and the fragments were buried with the individual. When Mary broke that box and poured out the ointment on the feet of Jesus, the bible says that the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Everyone there was made a part of the experience. It may have even drifted outside the house so that those around the house could enjoy the fragrance of her sacrifice for the Lord.

Judas Iscariot is in the presence of the only One Who could save him from his sin. But he was quick to put an economic value to what had happened and protested the waste. Jesus indicates the gift as a symbol of preparing his body for burial, but he did not forget the poor as well. He stated they would be with us always and needing our concern and help. Judas even goes as far as to declare that “He has prospered and needs nothing.” He questioned why the money wasn’t given to the poor. He oversaw the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.

As is stated in Matthew 25: 31-49 “Our gifts to anyone in need, large or small, are tokens to our loyalty and commitment, as well as an expression of our love for Christ.