

Psalm 126

A Song of Ascents.

¹ When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;

then it was said among the nations,
'The LORD has done great things for them.'

³ The LORD has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,

shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover
Jesus came to Bethany,
the home of Lazarus,
whom he had raised from the dead.

² There they gave a dinner for him.

Martha served,
and Lazarus was one of those
at the table with him.

³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume
made of pure nard,
anointed Jesus' feet,
and wiped them with her hair.

The house was filled
with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But Judas Iscariot,
one of his disciples
(the one who was about to betray him), said,

⁵ 'Why was this perfume not sold
for three hundred denarii
and the money given to the poor?'

⁶ (He 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.)

⁷ Jesus said,
'Leave her alone.
She bought it

so that she might keep it
for the day of my burial.

⁸You always have the poor with you,
but you do not always have me.'

Reading the Psalm This Week

Of course, the first earworm this week
"Bringing in the Sheaves"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ad54bH-nQTM>

but the 1874 gospel chorus isn't too close to the psalm, eh?

Here's a closer rendition in a gospel guitar sound:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ad54bH-nQTM>

That's Molly Parden featured

Remember Marty Haugen, Midwest US Lutheran b.1950,
Providing a soundtrack for ecumenical liturgical renewal:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ai9AesuK5vg>

A 'song of ascents' title is tied to a pilgrimage festival,
One of the annual in-gatherings to the temple
Communal celebrations of nationhood, survival

This 'going up to Jerusalem' is implied in gospels,
And challenged in John's repeated trips by Jesus to festivals
Imagine the longer arcs of this nostalgia!

We go out with weeping, and return with joy –
Exile and return, in Marcus Borg's terms
Exile in Babylon and restoration –

What's our exile and return?
What collective humiliation?

Others' shame and pride?

Reading the Gospel This Week

Since John doesn't get a year in the 3 year lectionary,
We get occasional visits in each season –
Here, anticipating the passion

We all conflate the stories of anointing.
What part of Jesus was anointed, with what?
Who was the anointer?

This is Mary – sister of Martha and Lazarus,
Not a woman of ill repute, but a student of Jesus
With enough money to buy nard...

This 'perfume' is tied to funerary practice, not luxury
'Purification by putrefaction', tomb to ossuary
But why wait, or not, for Jesus' death?

The second half is about Judas Iscariot
Elaborations of his role and motivation,
Preparing for his betrayal

The post-resurrection issues,
In the Johannine community
Vary from Luke/Acts communalism

What have you made of this closing saying
The balance of charity and justice,
Purity and consumption?

