Fifth S in Lent 2025 Meditation
Isa. 43:16-21; Phil.3:4b-14; Jn. 12:1-8

". . .A MOMENT IN TIME. . ."

"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." (John 12:3, NRSV).

Many of you will remember a song by Whitney Houston by that same title, "A Moment in Time." It's a song replete with passion and desire to find that moment when the singer could once and for all share and give of himself/herself in an ultimate emptying, as it were. "Give me one moment in time. . .then in that one moment in time, I will feel, I will feel eternity."

Mary of Bethany, out of her initiative, found her moment in time. As an ardent follower of the Lord Jesus, she had been listening intently to his teachings and pronouncements. No doubt, as she "choose the better portion" listening to him when Jesus visited with them as his beloved family. And her sister Martha complained that Mary left her to sweat it out in the kitchen. Thus she had intuitively anticipated developments in Jesus' final days more than any of those who were around the Lord.

The writer of the fourth gospel had a refreshing new take or view of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. He had what I would call a progressive understanding of Jesus' work of redeeming love in the world. That makes it so intriguing that the writer of the gospel of John, distinctly from the synoptics – Matthew, Mark & Luke, slightly differed from them in the composition of Jesus' inner circle. To that extent, there appears to be an avoidance of the all-male inner circle that we find elsewhere, so that throughout the gospel of John the 12 disciples seldom get the focus in his narrative. I mean, that is where women became predominant in the roles within the inner circle, or at least receive parity as a result.

So when Mary brought out the bottle of perfume, she did it at the opportune time. She didn't wait until she was told. In fact, quite possibly no one else knew or was aware of what she had a mind to do. Nor did she ask permission from anyone of the disciples. She did not have any need of any one asking or urging her to proceed. She opened the (one pound!) bottle of perfume and anointed Jesus' feet, then wiped them with her hair. Interestingly, it was Judas that raised the issue of what the perfume could have fetched in terms of money to give to the poor. And it was the Lord Jesus himself who defended Mary's extravagant demonstration. The Lord Jesus clearly stated that the act was evidence of Mary's devotion to Jesus as her Lord. And that it was also a preemptive, or an anointing in anticipation of his final moments. He said that he will not always be in the flesh and in the world, while the poor will always be a part of the human landscape.

So what is this all about for us today? This serves as a mirror of what real and true discipleship is. It shows that true discipleship calls for us to be bold and decidedly committed. It shows that commitment cannot be merely intellectual assent, but indeed vitally involved in actions that make Jesus real in the life of people around us. And all others we touch with our life and influence. Each one of us is given a moment in time to be a true and faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus. AMEN.

Joy and peace to you each one!
Pastor Ben
Rev. Dr. Ben Vinluan