

The Seniors Bible Study written by Lynn Schlessman

CAST

Kay –
Steve-
Bill –
Richard –
Joanne –
Kathy -
Jesus –
Woman who anoints Jesus -
Disciple #1 -
Disciple #2 -
Disciple #3 -

(Kay and Steve enter and go to the half-circle of chairs on stage – speaking as they move)

Kay: Looks like we are the first ones here – I'll get the coffee ready.

Steve: Don't make it as weak as you do at home –

Kay: Now what do you mean by that?

Steve: I don't think you've been putting as much coffee in the coffee.

Kay: Well, you won't let me use decaf and I don't think a lot of caffeine is good for you.

Steve: You've been reading too many magazines.

(While they are speaking Bill comes in followed by Richard – the men shake hands as they greet each other – they say, "hi" to Kay and she to them)

Steve: Bill, you were in Arizona – did you get over to Goodyear to see the Indians?

Bill: I did – some of those young hitters are very impressive – especially that LaPorta kid.

Richard: Could be quite a season for the Tribe.

Kay: Steve thinks that every year – at least until they play a game or two.

Steve: This year will be different.

(Joanne enters – while she is greeting the group Kathy enters – she greets everyone also)

Kathy: I just got back from Philadelphia – I was there for my grandson’s band concert. I wish I lived closer.

Joanne: Fred and I went to all of Brianna’s basketball games this year – I really enjoyed them.

Richard: Maybe we should get started. Bill, would you lead us in prayer?

Bill: Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Holy Word and for the guidance your Word gives us. Through your Holy Spirit open our hearts to your will that our lives might bring glory to your name. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Richard: We are at Mark 14 verse 3. My Bible has the title: Mary anoints Jesus. I’ll read: (as Richard reads the woman acts out what is being read)

Richard: While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the leper and was reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of perfume, real nard and very expensive. She broke the jar and poured perfume on his head. (Richard and the Senior Group freezes in place)

Disciple #1 (talking to Disciple #2): Why was the perfume wasted like this?

Disciples #2 (responding to #1): It could have been sold for more than 300 denarii.

Disciple #3 (responding to the other two): It would have been better to have given the money to the poor.

Disciple #2 (now to the woman): Think of the people who are hungry – you could have helped them.

Disciple #3 (to the woman): Just like a woman – throwing away good money on perfume.

Jesus (harshly): Let her alone. Why are you bothering her? (more gently and looking at the woman) She has done a beautiful thing to me. (Looking at the disciples) The poor you always have with you, and you can help them whenever you want to, but you are not always going to have me. (looking at the woman again) She has done what she could. She came ahead of time to pour perfume on my body to prepare it for burial. (looking back at the disciples) I tell you the truth, wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. (looks at the woman)

Kathy: Just like men – always criticizing what a woman does.

Kay (with a little chuckle): Steve would never do that – would you, Steve?

Steve: Well, I haven’t for at least three minutes.

Joanne: I have always wondered what Jesus had done for her.

Kathy: I've done some reading on this story – in Mark she doesn't have a name. Richard, you said your Bible titled this section, Mary anoints Jesus. I'll bet some man made that mistake. In John's gospel Mary does anoint Jesus – they are at her brother Lazarus' home. But in Mark all of this takes place at the home of Simon the leper. And the woman is given no name.

Bill: A name – no name – what's the difference?

Kathy: Now that's a man talking. Look at the history books – who do you read about? Men. And the women who gave birth and worked from before sun-up to after sundown are mostly ignored. But she was not ignored by Jesus.

Kay: Wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world what she has done will be told in memory of her. That's what Jesus said.

Kathy: I think Mark did not give her a name for a reason - so we would wonder who she was and think of all the women who reached out to Jesus in his ministry.

Joanne: Like the woman who had bleeding for twelve years – who sneaked up and touched Jesus' robe and was healed.

Kay: Or the foreign woman who asked Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter. After Jesus said, "You shouldn't take the children's bread and give it to dogs" she surprised Jesus by responding, "But even the little puppies eat the crumbs that fall from the children's table." Jesus really liked her persistence and faith.

Kathy: I think of other women who encountered Jesus – Mary who wouldn't stay in the woman's place in the kitchen – but who sat at Jesus' feet. When her sister, Martha, criticized Mary for not helping, Jesus defended Mary.

Joanne: Or the woman at the well who told the whole village about Jesus.

Richard: I was really surprised to find out that Jesus and his disciples lived off the money of Mary Magdalene, and Joanna and Susanna and other women. Jesus did break some taboos.

Steve: What's the point of all of this?

Kathy: Too often when we tell about Jesus we tell about the twelve men who were with him.

Joanne: And forget to tell about the women.

Bill (holding up his hands): Okay, okay, we're on your side.

Kay: Kathy, I'm glad you brought all of this up – I have never thought about that woman as expressing all the gratitude of the women Jesus helped. I always think of her as a clue to watch for the women in the rest of the story – at the cross and on Easter.

Joanne: Yeah, when the men have all run off scared – the women are still there. Even when Jesus is dead, the women still come to bring spices.

Kathy: And women are the first to hear the Resurrection news.

Joanne: I am glad that in our day the proper place of women is finally being acknowledged.

Kay: In my lifetime women have gone from not even being on the church council to being bishops.

Bill: I think that is just a case of the church mimicking society.

Kathy: I resent that. Jesus is the one who is guiding the church in this – he has wanted to raise up women's ministry all along.

Richard: Then why did it not happen until now?

All three women together: Men!

Steve: You all sound like a bunch of feminists. Everything was better when the women were at home raising the children.

Kathy: And the men were being irresponsible.

Bill: I think in some ways my son is better off than I was. He certainly knows his children better. But he and his wife are always short on time.

Joanne: I think the kids do suffer when everyone is working full time.

Kathy: I think that we need to make some adjustments – maybe we wouldn't have to work so much if we knew the difference between our wants and our needs.

Bill: Kids are just too involved in activities! My son's family hardly ever can stop over for a visit.

Kathy: I want to go back to Richard's question – I think what you were asking is, "If Jesus wanted to make women equal to men why did it take 2000 years for this to happen among Christians?"

Richard: That's the question.

Kathy: I have asked myself that question also. I've come up with an answer for myself.

Bill: Well, let's hear it.

Kathy: I like to start with the parable of the sower. You know, the one where the seed is sown in various places – on the path, in rocky ground, among weeds, in good soil. I think of Jesus' words and ministry as seed that is being sown every time we study the gospels. Seeds of respect for women have been sown in every age but the weeds and rocky ground and hard path have not allowed what grew from that seed to flourish. But in our age that seed has fallen on good soil.

Richard: I like that idea. Maybe the same could be said for the seeds of nonviolence. Jesus has sown those seeds through the centuries but they get choked by greed, revenge, and, most often, our fears.

Joanne: Or the seeds of respect for those who differ from us are in the gospels but until 150 years ago Christians were still keeping blacks as slaves. Even today we often fail to respect those who do not look like us.

Steve: And Jesus sowed lots of seeds against materialism but they have a tough time growing these days.

Kay: So every time we gather to study together seeds are sown. And God wants to give them growth and produce new fruit.

Steve: I guess that is a good reason to keep on gathering like this.

Richard: Sure is. (Pause) Joanne – would you close with prayer?

Joanne: Sure. (pause) Gracious God, we thank you for opening our world to new possibilities through Jesus. Let the seeds he has sown in us this day grow and mature in us. Let our lives produce the fruit of faith, hope and love. Give us respect for one another and lead us to show that respect in all our words and deeds. Thank you for this study and for one another. Amen.