

John 12:1-8

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

April 1, 2001

I think she was in love.

You have seen it a hundred times in movies or on TV. A thousand times.

Some of you have felt it – lived it.

Being in love.

The whole world is suddenly spring and flowers – fragrant - blooming.

There is sunshine in your heart even on the grayest winter day.

You want to be close, touching, being touched.

You see him or her and your spirit leaps.

You are like a young lamb bouncing with new life.

To be in love is the most wonderful feeling in all the world.

I think she was in love.

Mary. Sister who sat at Jesus' feet while Martha slaved to get a meal ready. Do you remember the story, how Martha complained to Jesus, and Jesus told her Mary had made the right choice – being with him, listening to him?

Mary, sister of Lazarus whom Jesus had recently raised out of death. Four days he had been in the grave before Jesus called his name and he came walking out of the tomb. Alive once more.

Mary of Bethany.

I think she was in love with Jesus.

How else to explain her actions? Taking a whole pound of costly perfume made of pure nard – oil from a plant that grows in northern India – so expensive that what she poured out was worth a whole years wages for a working man – she took the perfume and anointed Jesus' feet with it. And then she wiped it with her hair. Her love – all the affection she felt for this man Jesus.

Think of it – he had defended her against her domineering older sister. He had turned her tears of grief and sorrow into tears of joy by raising her brother.

She loved Jesus.

Jesus said the perfume was purchased for the day of his burial but she was pouring it out now. Did she think of marriage to this eligible bachelor Jesus? A home with him? Children? It is hard to imagine that she didn't.

But if that was her dream it would be disappointed.

The way so many dreams that we concoct for Jesus are disappointed.

Judas' dreamed for more money in the common purse. For him Jesus meant profits – wealth – and all the things money can buy. But here Jesus was letting the money soak into the dust.

The money should have been given to the poor was the suggestion. “The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me,.” Jesus replied.

In a short time Jesus would be greeted with palm branches, cries of Hosanna. King of Israel the crowd would name him, dreaming of victory over every enemy. He would be their David, felling the mighty Goliaths. The crowd would be disappointed too.

And what of you? What do you want from Jesus? Really want?

Maybe it as simple as some right answers on that test you did not really prepare for.

Or a good job when you are looking for one.

Maybe you are like Mary, hoping Jesus will bring someone to love into your life – children, a family.

How often we look to Jesus for healing for ourselves, those we love.

A new beginning when our actions bring us to a dead end.

Forgiveness – hope – new life.

I am not able to make any promises this day about good jobs, or good grades, or someone who will love you, or children, or healing. Maybe Jesus will give you these, maybe he will not.

But I do know that he gives to you what he gave to Mary, and Judas and the crowds that called him king: He gives you all the love that is in his dying for you. He gives you all the forgiveness and all the hope that comes through his obedient suffering and death. He gives you all the life that is in his resurrection. His own life is yours.

Paul wrote in our second lesson that before Jesus was in his life Paul had lots of things that were precious. But once he knew Jesus only Jesus mattered. By comparison everything else was just garbage.

As precious as love and success and health are to us all, the day will come when we shall know Jesus and nothing else will matter. I can hardly imagine that.

But one day in God's kingdom you and I will know it is true. We will know for ourselves that the love Mary poured out on Jesus was the most sensible thing that could be done.