

LENT: A PILGRIMAGE WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

The 40 days of Lent are divided into six weeks, within the Lunar Calendar. Each Sunday following Ash Wednesday (Feb 22nd this year) begins the week but is not counted as one of the forty days. Thus, each week has six days, and the four days prior to the 1st Sunday (Ash Wednesday to Saturday) completes the forty days.

Today is the 1st Sunday of Lent, and the pilgrimage focuses on the subject of fasting – giving something up in order to remind me what Christ gave up to free me from my sin. To “*give up something for Lent*” provides me the opportunity to go without what I either take for granted or truly enjoy. For instance, waking up an hour early to pray and read denies me an hour of sleep each morning that I take for granted, and perhaps forces me to go to bed earlier the night before. Giving up coffee or dessert denies me something that I greatly enjoy, but do not really need.

Giving up also means *giving away*. As Christ gave away his life for me, I, too, give away something of value. The study below remembers the woman who anointed Jesus by breaking an expensive jar of perfume open and pouring it out on Christ as an expression of *giving away* her love and devotion to him. When I give something I value to the Lord, I too, express my love to him – a love that is more important than anything this world can offer.

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT: Mark 14:1-11 – Jesus is Anointed at Bethany

14 It was now two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill him.

² “But not during the Passover celebration,” they agreed, “or the people may riot.”

³ Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head.

⁴ Some of those at the table were indignant. “Why waste such expensive perfume?” they asked. ⁵ “It could have been sold for a year’s wages and the money given to the poor!” So they scolded her harshly.

⁶ But Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me? ⁷ You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. ⁹ I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman’s deed will be remembered and discussed.”

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests to arrange to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹ They were delighted when they heard why he had come, and they promised to give him money. So he began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

Meditation by Angela Neufeld. Kingfisher Farm, Surrey, B.C.

The woman at Bethany was lavish. Throwing away her money on perfume and then pouring that precious perfume over Jesus’ feet—she became a mockery. What a waste!

The thought of wasting time, wasting money—wasting anything—is horrible to me. Laziness. Irresponsibility. In the throes of summer on the farm, there is simply not time to waste. And yet, what

am I missing with my focused, determined work ethic? I see others sitting in the sun and visiting and think—I *don't have time to waste*.

On the other hand, I often feel like my life here at Kingfisher Farm is so lavish. I am able to breathe in the crisp morning air, spend time cleaning up after chickens and cows who don't talk back to me, harvest fresh food, preserve food for the winter, skim off cream milked in the morning to top our baked oatmeal—this is lavish. It's lavish when my conversation is interrupted by the barred owl's call. It's lavish when the corn seed that my children planted can now be ground into gluten free pancakes that I can eat. Or, maybe it sounds foolish, like living in the past, making way more work than one needs with modern conveniences. Could it be that my deep attention and care for God's creation could be an act of lavish worship?

I want to cultivate eyes and a heart that stop for beauty, which can say to my mind and body: "Hey, it is worth wasting time here—to the Glory of God."

Questions inviting response:

1. What among the lavish things of my life can I offer to Jesus during this season of Lent?
 - What is the Holy Spirit prodding me to give as a private acknowledgement of my devotion to Jesus until Easter Sunday, April 9th.
2. As I live each day, where do I find myself behaving more like Judas than the woman? How does the busyness of my life, and the values of my culture interfere with worshipping Christ, my Lord?
 - Is Christ calling me to make some adjustments?

Prayer

Loving God - Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,

Forgive me for my busyness, and the many moments that my lifestyle leaves you outside and looking in, rather than reigning over me with your loving wisdom and grace. As you gave up even your Son for me, may you teach me again the joy of sacrifice, and the way of the Cross. And may you accept my Lenten sacrifice today, as I offer it to you in complete humility, knowing that it is nothing in comparison with what you have given for me.

Thank you for your Holy Spirit, your wonderful church, the fellowship of others, the forgiveness of sins, the promised resurrection, and of life with you, Father, Son and Spirit, forever. Amen.