

THINKING POINTS:

Closing Question: In what way does this lesson change, or enhance your understanding of God/Jesus/Spirit?

"The perfume with which Mary anoints the feet of Jesus is a prophesy of the fact that life and love are stronger than death. It is a prophesy of resurrection [when] we will no longer smell the bad odour of hatred, vendetta, enmity and death but only the perfume of the resurrection, of life in God accomplished in the life in God.

[These times in which we live] the odor of death, of hatred and resentment is so strong that it intoxicates not only our lungs but even our hearts and souls. Everything that has to do with death gives off a bad smell, even those who hate. Weapons give off bad smells, even violent and resentful words give off a bad smell. Today we ask for our nostrils to be impregnated with perfume, the perfume of life, the perfume of friendship and of gratuitous love, of the perfume that is a prophesy not only of the resurrection of Jesus but also of our own."

Fr. Francesco Patton

Next week's lesson:

"The Woman Who Was Set Free on the Sabbath"

Luke 13:10-17



TALKING POINTS

Lesson 5

"The Woman Who Saw and Anointed Jesus"

Mark 14:1-10

Focus scripture

Mark 14:6

"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me."

Food for Thought:

Is there a part of your daily life, a time of day, an object, or something which you consider to be set apart for God, something which may aid you in worship, prayer, contemplation, or Bible study?

“Attention is the beginning of devotion.” Mary Oliver

What's something that stood out to you about last week's lesson of the Samaritan woman at the well?

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND:

Today's story is of a woman who saw and understood Jesus' mission, and anointed him with expensive perfumed oil. Spikenard was a rare essential perfumed oil used for anointing royalty, priests, and temple utensils. The act of anointing was usually done by a priest or a prophet for the act of sanctifying, or setting apart, a person or object to be used for religious or spiritual practices. Bodies were also prepared for burial by anointing with precious spikenard oils and spices.

In those days, young women were often given an alabaster jar of precious oil to serve as their dowry or inheritance. Quite likely, the oil poured out in reverence to Jesus was everything the woman had of worth in the world. And yet she didn't hesitate to pour it all in a most shocking display of extravagant love and worship.

Spikenard is antibacterial and antifungal, providing wound care for minor cuts or scrapes or fighting fungal infections on the skin. Spikenard also has known anti-inflammatory properties.

Spikenard is also known for its effects on the mind. It has proven sedative and calming effects. Inhaling spikenard can help promote longer, deeper, and more refreshing sleep, fight insomnia, or even help ward off stress during the day.

Its spiritual properties include calming the mind in readiness for prayer. It is said to encourage forgiveness and instill balance, helping to quiet and soothe the mind.

THREE?, OR FOUR? ANOINTING STORIES

1. Compare the anointing stories from each of the four Gospel accounts. How are they different? How are they similar?
 - a. Mark 14:3; Matthew 26:6-7; John 12:1-3
 - b. Mark 14:4-5; Matthew 26:8-9; John 12:4-6
 - c. Mark 14:6-8; Matthew 26:10-12; John 12:7-8
 - d. Mark 14:9; Matthew 26:13; Luke 7:36-50

SHE SAW JESUS

2. By the woman's actions, what did she understand about who Jesus is?
3. In the context of what we know about anointing practices and about nard (spikenard) and its uses, what were her actions symbolizing?
4. In what ways was this a holy and intimate act?
5. How did Jesus see her?

CHIASM

6. Review chiasms: Central Clause Chiasm
The effect of this pattern is to give prominence to the central statement, which can therefore be the main point of the passage, or pivot or turning point of the passage. Take for example an ABCB'A' chiasm in John 4:

*A*²³ *But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,*
B *for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.*
*C*²⁴ ***God is spirit,***
B' *and those who worship him*
A' *must worship in spirit and truth.”*

7. Determine the chiasm of Mark 14:1-10
8. Which verse is the central statement of the passage?

TALE OF TWO PATHS

8. Consider the path of the men going forward from the first verse of Mark 14 through to the end of his Gospel; compare that to the path of the women on that same journey.
 - a. What are some words to describe the men's actions?
 - b. What are some words to describe the women's actions?