



Lenten Reflection for Monday, April 11th

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You can listen to the reading and reflection by clicking [here](#).

John 12:1 - 11

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. 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. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

Just to recap: Jesus is at dinner with his friends and disciples. Present at the table is a man who, in a few days time, will betray Jesus, ultimately resulting in Jesus' death. Us as the readers know this but *Jesus knows this too*. During the dinner when Mary brings out expensive oil and anoints Jesus' feet, Judas, who, again, is about to betray Jesus, judges Mary for being too extravagant and shames her for not selling the perfume and giving the money to the poor. Talk about an awkward and tense moment.

This story gives us a good glimpse into the personality of Jesus. His close friend is plotting to get him arrested and yet sits at the table and has the audacity to cast judgment on others. How must Jesus feel? If it were me, my head would have exploded. But Jesus doesn't get angry. And he doesn't shy away from the tension either. Instead, he slyly addresses it. He says just enough to let Judas know that he knows, but not enough to worry the others at the table.

Now, the other people at the table may be confused. "Oil? Burial? The poor? What is Jesus talking about?". But Judas knows exactly what he means. I wonder how Judas feels at that moment. I think he brings up the poor as a way to mask his own guilt and make him feel better about the betrayal he is about to commit. By pointing out Mary's flaws, Judas is shifting focus away from him and trying to prove that he is still a good person. But deep

down, he knows that what he is doing is wrong. So when Jesus tells him He won't be around, I bet Judas feels a mixture of fear and guilt- Jesus is on to him and Judas will be responsible for His death.

As I read the story, I think about who I most relate to at the table. Obviously, I don't want to be a Judas. But I think sometimes I fall into the same sins as him. I make decisions that I know are harmful to myself and others. I start projecting a moral superiority on the outside in order to hide the brokenness I have within. I start living in a world of secrets and lies, building walls between myself and my loved ones, doing everything I can to project an image of having it all together, even when I really am struggling deep down.

What's beautiful and yet confusing about this story is that Jesus still lets Judas sit at the table, even though He knows what Judas is about to do. And instead of ignoring the issue, Jesus addresses it and, in a way, holds Judas accountable. In a similar way, Jesus lets me- and all of us- sit at His table, even though He knows our true natures and the mistakes we will make. With his death and resurrection, Jesus ensured that we will find freedom from sin and death. And He continues to invite us to the table and offers this freedom over and over again.

Another piece of the story is that somehow, without knowing all the details, Mary is clued into what is about to take place. She is so in tune with God's divine plan that she is given the sacred and holy task of preparing Jesus for His burial. And she willingly "wastes" her expensive oil and humbles herself before Jesus to complete this task. So my prayer in this season of Lent is that Jesus would help me be less of a Judas and more of a Mary: Lord, help me be in tune and aware of your Spirit. Help me lay down my own desires and moral superiority and instead lean into you and your love. Where I am prideful, make me humble. When I have a scarcity-mindset, help me live in the abundance of your love. Thank you for continually inviting me to the table and offering me a chance, over and over again, to be forgiven and renewed. Help me accept that invitation and keep moving toward a life of more wholeness and freedom.



Chloe Miracle-Rutledge started attending Holy Apostles virtually when she moved to New York in August 2020 and has been coming in-person for the last few months. She is a high school special education English teacher and lives in Ditmas Park with her cat, Niles.