

The Reverend Marjo Anderson

**C: Lent 5
John 12:1-8**

**3 April 2022
Salem, Bridgeport**

“What She Did for Love”

She loved him – more than she had ever loved anyone –

more than she had loved her mother and father, more than she loved her brother and sister,
more than she had ever loved anyone.

She loved him because he had changed her life – totally, completely, absolutely.

It's not that she had had a hard life; she hadn't. She had had a very good life.

Although her family wasn't wealthy, she had never wanted for anything.

Their home was large and spacious and well-appointed,

perfect for entertaining family and friends and her brother's business clients.

The house gave the appearance of vast wealth, but in that sense they lived a bit beyond their means,

since they had no servants to run the place – just her sister Martha and her.

But there was certainly enough money to provide for all their needs, hers and her brother's and sister's.

That's why she and her sister hadn't had to get married.

While there wasn't enough money to waste, there was enough to provide her with all she really needed.

But even though she had everything that she could want –

a loving family, friends, a beautiful home, an abundance of food, fine clothes –

there had been something missing, some emptiness deep inside that nothing seemed to fill.

For years her daily drinking of the special herbal tea had soothed her,

but 3 years ago it had stopped working and she'd scarce been able to drag herself out of bed in the morning.

That was when she had gone to see that traveling healer, Jesus of Galilee.

And what she had found was far more than a healer.

She still remembered how she had gone to hear him preach

and found him so captivating that she had listened for 2 hours, hanging onto his every word!

Afterwards she had gone forward to receive healing, but she had been too late.

Jesus' disciples had called him away for dinner.

But Jesus had seen her, and invited her to come along with them to the outdoor barbecue, and she had.

And Jesus had spent the whole evening with her, listening and talking and it had been absolutely wonderful!

Who would have thought that he and she would have so much in common? But they did

There was this easy rapport between them and she was sure they could talk forever and never run out of things to say.

She had invited him to dinner the next night and he had come, and Lazarus, too, had felt that same rapport.

From then on she had been his greatest fan, going to hear him preach anytime she could

and whenever he was in the area, he'd stay with them.

And several months after she had met him, he had laid his hands on her and healed her

and from that moment on she had been a new person.

No longer depressed, there was a joy inside her that made her heart soar.

He had changed her life, turned it upside down, in fact.

The joy in her life was such that it had turned her from a quiet, shy, retiring introvert,

into almost an extrovert who found herself actively seeking to meet new people so that she could tell them about Jesus!

And then, there had come that awful day when her brother Lazarus had gotten sick.

She had sent for Jesus, but he hadn't come.

They had waited and waited as her brother had gotten sicker and sicker,

but Jesus hadn't come, and her brother, her beloved brother, Lazarus, had died.

She had felt so betrayed.

How could Jesus, her best friend, the man she loved, the man who had changed her life, have done this to her?

She didn't understand. It made no sense.

Her heart had broken over Lazarus' death, but it had been shattered by Jesus' betrayal.

When Jesus had finally come, three days after Lazarus had died,

her sister Martha had gone to meet him, but Mary had refused.

There were just no words to express her grief and anger and hurt.

When he had finally come to the house, he had asked for her.

She went. And she knelt before him as propriety dictated.

But her heart, once filled with joy and love, was tied up into a ball of hurt, encased in a fist of rage.

She stared directly into his eyes and through clenched teeth spoke her accusation:

“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

He looked as if she had slapped him, but he did not respond in kind.

He asked her, “Where have you laid him?”

By this time she was too choked to answer, so someone else said, “Come, and we’ll take you”.

They had all headed for the door,

But she had stayed, her rage dissolving into unquenchable sorrow,

and she had crouched on the floor, hugging herself, rocking back and forth, sobbing uncontrollably.

Then a hand was lifting her, and guiding her – Jesus’ hand – and he was weeping,

and love rose up again in her to mingle with hate, and a spark of hope appeared within the darkness of her despair.

And Jesus had raised her brother from the dead. Lazarus was alive! Jesus had not failed her!

And everything should have been fine, but it wasn’t.

Jesus had been so troubled and it had taken her what seemed like forever

to get him to tell her what was bothering him, but finally he had told her.

Raising Lazarus had probably been the last straw for the Pharisees.

It was just a matter of time now before they would kill him.

And now she understood.

That most wonderful thing Jesus had done for her brother,

that most loving thing he had done for her, had cost him dearly.

In giving her what she wanted, in giving Lazarus back his life, Jesus had given her everything,

had risked his life, and now would probably lose it.

Her heart was so full – of joy and sorrow, hope and despair, peace and pain, gratitude and guilt.

But through it all was the overwhelming love she had for this man who had given her everything that he had.

How could she express a gratitude that went beyond words?

How could she make him understand that she knew what he had done for her?

How could she show him how much she loved him?

She had to give him something,

something that would mean something NOW in these last few months or weeks or days of his life,

something that would have special meaning to him,

something that would express what her words could not.

She had remembered something he had said to her when he had talked to her about what was to come –

that God’s love was like spikenard, so fragrant, that it would even overcome the smell of death.

And that was when she knew what she must do.

She had gathered up everything that she personally owned that was of any value –

her money, her jewelry, the 2 pieces of art that were hers, her finest cloak –

and she had traded them all for \$70,000 worth of spikenard.

Her family, their friends, the disciples, wouldn’t understand – they’d think she had lost her mind.

But Jesus would know.

Her gift would convey what words would not –her all-consuming love for the one who had come

so that she might have life and have it abundantly.

May you, like Mary, come to know Jesus.

May he be your best friend and may you spend precious time together.

May he teach you and heal you, guide you and protect you.

May he open your heart and mind and spirit to receive all he has to give.

May he fill your life with peace and hope and love and joy.

May he turn your life upside down and inside out

so that you come to see the truth that remains hidden from the rest of the world.

May he be everything you have searched for and give you everything you hoped to find.

And may you know in your relationship with Jesus a life filled with such abundance

that you cannot help but share the news in word and deed with everyone you meet.

May you, like Mary, fall in love with Jesus. **Amen**