

PREPARING AT HOME

April 1-7, 2019

Focus reading: John 12:1–8 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=418975603>)

Other lectionary readings: Isaiah 43:16–21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b–14

Theme: The Fragrance of Life

Although this story is told in all four gospels, John is the only one who places the event at the home of Lazarus. The last time we heard of Jesus visiting in that same home, Lazarus was dead and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were upset that Jesus had arrived too late. The smell of death already filled the home. But Jesus raised Lazarus, who is now seated at the table with them, and it is Jesus who is facing death. In this moment, however, it is not the stench of death but the fragrance of expensive perfume that fills the room. Mary anoints Jesus' feet with costly perfume; and in this loving, prophetic act demonstrates the generous, abundant love that Jesus has shown to them. Because of him their brother is at the table. No gift is enough to show her gratitude! While she chooses welcome, celebration, life, and love, Judas chooses judgment, dishonesty, and greed. Not even this strong perfume can completely overpower the stench of death! Jesus knows that death will come soon enough for him, but it won't come tonight. This is the time to enjoy the fragrance of life!

A GENEROUS GIFT

Mary gave a very generous gift to Jesus. Why do you suppose she wanted to give such a costly and personal gift? Make your own sweet-smelling gift for someone. Put cloves around the outside of an orange, firmly sticking each clove into the peel. Tie a pretty ribbon around the orange. Give it to someone who you care about – someone you would like to thank for being a special person in your life.

GIFTS GIVEN AND RECEIVED

Have you ever received an extravagant gift? What was it? Have you ever given an extravagant gift? What was it, and why did you give it? How did it make you feel to give or receive such a gift? What gift would you like to give to Jesus? What gift would you like to give to the poor? Draw pictures of those gifts.

PRAYER

Gracious, generous God,
We can never out-do you
in love or in the giving of gifts.
Thank you, God, for your extravagant love
and countless gifts to us.
May our lives be our thanks to you,
and may we be generous toward others.
Amen.

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