

John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary 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. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶(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.) ⁷Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

A dinner part was held to honour Jesus in thanksgiving for the new life given to Lazarus by Martha and Mary. Lazarus was amongst the guests as was Judas but we do not know how many others were present.

Dining together with others outside the family, and even within the family, has not been easy for the last couple of years. Many have not gone out for a meal for at least two years and perhaps some have not invited others into their homes for the last couple of years.

Mary and Martha invited Jesus and others to this celebratory dinner. Martha, of course was the one serving the meal, Lazarus was at the table to dine and Mary wanted to express her gratitude and love to Jesus. She chose an unconventional way of doing so; she knelt at his feet, anointed the feet with the fragrant offering and then she wiped his feet with her hair. To do so she would have needed to remove and head covering, loosen her hair, and let it hang down; not the action of a respectable person. She was not bothered about any embarrassment for herself; she just wanted to express gratitude. Judas voiced a complaint about the waste. Was he the only one that thought this way or was his the voice that expressed the view of others?

The fragrance of the nard perfume would have permeated the whole of the house and probably flowed out into the street.

In our thanksgiving and gratitude to Jesus for the new life we have with him do we offer extravagant thanks; do we give a generous gift? Can we become a sweet fragrance that permeates out into the community and changes its atmosphere? Can we purely, by our presence as communities of faith and individual followers of Jesus, change the community on which we live, not embarrassed by what we do? I believe the answer to that is a "yes". The question we each need to ask is how, in our situation, we can change the atmosphere.

Smiling faces, gracious offering of help, litter picking, care giving, hospitality and respect can all play their part in changing the environment. Street Pastors and Community Chaplains make a difference.

What about hosting a meal for others to celebrate the love of Jesus?

Last Wednesday evening a Passover Seder was held at Providence leading into a sharing in communion and a salad supper. It was a good time of fellowship with a growth in understanding about the communion service by looking at where it came from. (A big thanks to David Walker and others who made it possible.)

Once a month a meal is held in Kingswinford, on a Sunday for those who would otherwise be eating alone. During school holidays, in Brierley Hill, meals have been served to local families; it happens elsewhere around the Circuit in different ways. Let us make the most of these opportunities to share Jesus as we share food, as we pour out our love for Jesus as a fragrant offering that permeates beyond the walls of our buildings.