

Week 4: Dinner Interrupted

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you?
2. How do you feel about the idea of different authors of Scripture adapting stories for their own purposes? How does that impact how you read the Bible, if at all?
3. Read Mark 14:3-9. What catches your attention from this story?
 - Use your imagination to put yourself in the scene. If you were the woman, how might you have felt when you entered the room? When you heard the criticisms? When Jesus spoke to you?
 - If you had been a guest at the dinner, how would you have felt as you watched this scene unfold? What might you have thought, said, or done?
4. Read Luke 7:36-50.
 - What similarities are there with Mark's story? What difference are there?
 - What points do you think Luke is making for his readers?
 - How have you experienced a connection between forgiveness and love?
 - Who do you identify with most in this story, and why?
5. Read John 12:1-8.
 - How does John use this story differently to Mark and Luke?
 - The speaker on Sunday suggested that mention of the fragrance of the perfume filling the room (v. 3) intentionally contrasts with the expected stench of death from Lazarus' tomb (11:39). What might be the significance of this comparison?
 - What lessons can we draw from this story about how we should live today?
6. Read again what Jesus said to and about the woman:
 - "She has done a beautiful thing" (Mark 14:6)
 - "She did what she could" (Mark 14:8)
 - "Her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown" (Luke 7:47)
 - "Your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48)
 - "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50)

Prayerfully consider whether any of these resonate with you. Take some time to share with the group and pray for one another.

Practice for the week: Loving self and others

In John's telling of this story, Mary, a beloved disciple, gives an extravagant gift to Jesus as oppressive political and religious forces close in upon him. Jesus sees and affirms the meaningfulness of Mary's gift. In these tumultuous times

- Decide on one thing you will do to express love and gratitude for someone else this week.
- Think of one way you can celebrate life this week, knowing that you, too, are a beloved disciple.