

### **John 12:1-8 (NRSV)**

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" <sup>6</sup> (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.)

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

### **Hebrews 2:10-15 (The Message)**

<sup>10-13</sup> It makes good sense that the God who got everything started and keeps everything going now completes the work by making the Salvation Pioneer (Jesus) perfect through suffering as he leads all these people to glory. Since the One who saves and those who are saved have a common origin, Jesus doesn't hesitate to treat them as family, saying,

*I'll tell my good friends, my brothers and sisters, all I know about you;  
I'll join them in worship and praise to you.*

*Again, Jesus puts himself in the same family circle when he says,  
Even I live by placing my trust in God.*

*And yet again,*

*I'm here with the children God gave me.*

<sup>14-15</sup> Since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Saviour took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by his death. By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death.

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Throughout Christian History one of the deepest mysteries has been how God could become a human being in Jesus and yet still remain God.

That God the creator of all things, could know what it's like to experience all the things that human beings experience.

Someone once said to me "Yes, but Jesus didn't know what it was like to be old and infirm."

No, he didn't, but he knew what it was like to have others decide for him, to be vulnerable, and in pain.

He loved probably more than we can ever love. He lost a loved one; he laughed and knew what it was to have good time; he cried over, and got angry at, the injustice in the world; he was criticised and betrayed.

And he experienced something we will never know - being forsaken by God.

The writer to the Hebrews in our first reading (Chapter 2) is showing his readers that Jesus was truly a man – a Human being. (It's not the easiest language so read it again later). "Both the one who makes men holy

and those who are made holy are one and the same family.” “Since the children are flesh and blood, it’s logical that the saviour took on flesh and blood in order to rescue him by his death”

And v18: Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted

There is a great hymn which puts this well

*He Walked Where I Walked  
He Stood Where I Stand  
He Felt What I Feel  
He Understands.  
He Knows My Frailty  
Shared My Humanity  
Tempted In Every Way  
Yet Without Sin.  
  
One Of A Hated Race  
Stung By The Prejudice  
Suffering Injustice  
Yet He Forgives.*

And he lived and died for each one us. We haven’t the same ethnic family or historical backgrounds as Jesus – or the same personality, yet because we are all human, the pinnacle of God’s creation, we have so much in common with each other. God knows, through Jesus, what it is like to **live** as a human being, not just **to create** them.

We each differ in looks, in character, in our backgrounds.

But underneath we are all humans, subject to the same joys and sorrows, anxieties, fears, guilt - the same capacity for love and anger – often depending on our circumstances

What is the best a human being can be? It will be to be like Jesus.

In this passage from John we have five very different people.

There is Lazarus the householder, and his sisters Martha the housekeeper, and Mary. We have Judas Iscariot, the keeper of the disciples’ purse and we have Jesus.

Today is dedicated to remembering Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Companions of Jesus.

What a lovely word is “companions”. We know little about them. They obviously had a big enough home to entertain, to provide hospitality for Jesus and his disciples.

Lazarus we chiefly know because he died and Jesus raised him from the dead, but he says nothing; does nothing. His sisters live in his home. Were they widows or had they families of their own grown up and away? How did he know Jesus?

We know more about the sisters because Martha was the one in another story, who rushed about doing all the caring and cooking and arranging in the background, and complained her sister Mary did not do enough. She was the one too – who in her grief, accused Jesus of not coming soon enough to heal her brother – before Jesus raised him.

Mary we know paid more attention to Jesus teaching than the practical details of entertaining – and here we see Mary is the one who worships him with the perfume. She recognises the need to make a sacrificial gesture to one whom she sensed was to be the ultimate sacrifice for her.

Then there is Judas. He regrets the “waste of the perfume” – the worshipful offering, of something he says would have been more use sold and the money given to the poor. Would he really? Sounds a bit like a modern decision a corporation wanting publicity might make – *or am I being cynical?*

However, that is a judgement that is not appropriate to make, when you see how Jesus responds to Mary’s gesture. He is the fifth person in this scene, and he reveals himself as full of love and common sense.

He, with grace, accepts her offering for what it is, one given in love to Jesus, whom she recognises as worthy of such a sacrifice. I don’t suppose just then she recognised the full implications of his death. But it was a gift of the very best she could offer, a gift of love.

Jesus appears so human here, enjoying the festivities and appreciating the love shown to him. But he has no harsh words for Judas – he never did have, only an indication of the most loving way to look at this gift.

I’d like to be a human being like him. With The help of God’s Holy Spirit, we can all work towards that goal.