

Monday in Holy Week

Hebrews 9:11-15 John 12:1-11

One day a few months ago,
I heard my daughter use the word “tacky.”
“Tacky” is one of those
underrated, versatile, biting
Southern words.
When said by just the right person in the just right way,
“tacky” covers a multitude of sins
and conveys mountains of judgment.

When someone calls you “tacky,”
they’re not calling you tasteless;
they’re not saying you’re trashy;
they’re not outright declaring you cheap, or common, or crude;
but they might as well be.

So when I heard my daughter say
that someone’s house was “tacky,”
I said, “Honey, do you even know what that word means?”
Without missing a beat, she said,
“Oh, Daddy, you know what ‘tacky’ means.
It’s when it’s all just a bit . . .
too much.”

And thus another passive-aggressive Southern belle was born.

It *is* amazing how we cringe
when we watch people go full-on “tacky”;
how our skin crawls,
how we feel embarrassed,
how we want to *name* it
when we see people walk right up to the line of good taste
and just *stomp* right over it.

It’s indecent.
It’s unseemly.
It’s undignified.

And so we chuckle;
we tisk tisk;
we judge it;
and we label it “tacky.”

That’s especially true when it comes to religion.

It’s one thing when people go overboard
with their jewelry, their yard art, their Christmas decorations,
but go overboard with God—
plunge yourself with sweet abandon
with true devotion,
with unfettered worship,
with ebullient adoration
into the heart of the one you call God—
and all the rest of us coil back,
look askance,
and mutter under our breath,
“Oh. Wow. You *really* believe that stuff, don’t you?”

Even to fellow believers,
it is somehow so embarrassing
to watch someone lose himself,
to see someone forget herself—
to become unguarded,
and vulnerable,
and powerless—
in their love for the Almighty.

It’s all just a bit . . .
too much.

It shouldn’t be,
but it is.

That is exactly what we see Mary do tonight.
Mary, who was one of Jesus’ closest friends,
Mary, who with her sister Martha had hosted Jesus in her home before,
Mary, whose brother Lazarus had died
and was raised back to life by the Lord:
this Mary . . . loved . . . Jesus.

So when, on a night like tonight,
just six days before the Passover,

she found that this same Jesus
was in her house once again,
Mary went full-on “tacky.”

While everyone else was enjoying dinner—
while everyone else was talking about the day,
talking about the priests,
talking about the authorities
who were trying to do Jesus in—
Mary snuck away to her room
picked up the most precious,
most fragrant thing she owned—
a full pound of pure nard—
and she came and knelt before Jesus,
held his feet,
and poured it out.

You have heard me say before
how pungent nard can be.
With nard, it is entirely possible to have
“too much of a good thing.”
One drop is lovely.
Five drops can make you swoon.
But a whole pound?
A whole pound can literally make you sick,
not to mention that it would cost
a year’s worth of wages.

And yet there she is:
holding the Lord’s feet,
kissing the calluses,
relishing the ripples.

Mary is not just honoring Jesus.
Mary is not just paying a kindness to Jesus.
Mary is *worshipping* Jesus
Somewhere deep down—
based on everything she has seen and known of him—
she knows this man is the fullness of the living God.
Maybe she can’t explain it with words;
she probably can’t rationalize it with reason;
but when you lose yourself in worship,
words and reason often go by the wayside.

And all the while,
the disciples look on in bewilderment and embarrassment.
Maybe Lazarus gets it,
given where he's been and what he's seen.
But Judas is the only one to speak up,
and you get the sense that
for almost everyone there,
it was all just a bit . . .
too much.

I wish we weren't so guarded
in the ways that we love Jesus.
I wish we weren't so polite,
so proper,
so well mannered,
so ordered
so easily offended.

I wish, like Mary,
we could lose ourselves,
that we could pour ourselves out,
that we could let it all be just a bit . . .
too much.

Why?
Because what *we* know now
that Mary *couldn't* have known then
is that in the next few days,
Jesus is going to do
the exact same thing for us.

In just a few days,
Jesus—
who is the most precious thing we've ever had—
will be opened up and poured out
at our feet.

In some inexplicable way,
the Son of God
will lose himself in sweet abandon.

And while it will *not* be beautiful,
it will *not* be decent,
it will *not* be dignified,

it *will* be life for us all:
for Mary, for you, for me.

Brothers and sisters,
we've now arrived at the holiest week of all.
Welcome to our journey to the cross
with the Lord Jesus.

However you've come to be
at his feet tonight—
however it is that you choose
to express your love for him this week—
just know that it could *never* be
“too much.”

There is no embarrassment here.
There is no judgment.
There is no shame.

For even as we speak,
the Lord himself is preparing
to show *his* great love for *you*
and when he does,
it will be
with everything he's got.

Amen.