

Monday in Holy Week

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

I remember the first time
I ever heard one of my kids
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 kid declare
that someone’s house was “tacky,”
I said, “Kid, do you even know what that word means?”

Without missing a beat, they 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 others 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 unseemly.
It’s uncomfortable.
It’s undignified.

And so we chuckle;
we tsk tsk;
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, or their Christmas decorations,
but go overboard with God—
plunge yourself with sweet abandon
with true devotion,
unfettered worship,
ebullient adoration
into the heart of the one they call Jesus—
and all the rest of us recoil,
look askance,
and mutter under our breath,
“Oh. Wow. You *really* believe that stuff, don’t you?”

Even to fellow believers,
it’s somehow so embarrassing
to watch others become unguarded,
and vulnerable,
and powerless—
in their love for the Almighty.

It’s all just a bit . . .
too much.

But it shouldn’t be.

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

While everyone else was enjoying dinner,
worrying over the priests and authorities
who were hot on Jesus' trail,
Mary snuck away to her room
picked up the most precious,
most fragrant thing she owned—
a full pound of pure nard—
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 will literally make you sick.

And yet there she is:
holding the Lord's feet,
kissing the calluses,
relishing the ripples,
pouring it out.

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,
but when you lose yourself in worship,
you don't need words.

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.
Judas is the only one to actually speak up,
but 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,
pour ourselves out,
and 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 *true and greater* fragrant offering—
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 on the cross
will lose *himself* in sweet abandon
as an act of worship and obedience,
and we will be the beneficiaries.

It makes no sense.

And while it will *not* be beautiful,
it will *not* be decent,
and it will *not* be dignified,
it *will* be life for us all:
for Mary, for you, for me.

We've now arrived at the holiest week of all
as we journey to the cross
in lock step 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 this week.
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.