



Dinner party – Touchpoint for April 2nd , 2025

John 12:1-8

TOUCH POINT

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

Grace and Peace to you from the Mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being

The Dinner Party

What is this dinner party in Bethany all about? I've been struggling to narrow down what John wants us to understand that hadn't already been said in other biblical stories.

I tried to focus on one character, and it took me one direction. I tried to focus on the most obvious characters being Jesus and Mary and I was pulled in another direction. Then I tried to make the central theme the gravity of the hour which was taking place before Jesus' execution.

Maybe it was just a dinner party. If someone tried to write about my family gatherings for future generations to read, they too might struggle making sense of my family's characters.

Every character at this dinner party has their own story. My mind is a swirling hunt for theological significance, and it feels like a perplexed state of where's Waldo!

Then it hit me. I am the dinner party! I can't separate all the characters present at the home in Bethany. I have each and every one of these characters in me. Each one of these characters has a story, a fear, an emotion. There are times when they all battle to have my attention. My attempt to suppress them causes me distress. That is when a little spiritual direction helps.

The Family System

When I have a session with my Spiritual Director, he uses the work of Internal Family Systems just for this purpose. Like the dinner party, IFS welcomes all those characters. Usually, one wants to be heard more than the others. They are all worthy to be heard and to be acknowledged. But my inner critic, like Judas in Bethany, has demands that throw me off my game

At this dinner party in Bethany, Jesus could have kicked Judas out. Judas callously interrupted Mary's washing of Jesus' feet.

Jesus could've become self-conscious when Mary began washing pouring perfume on his feet in the middle of the dinner party. Instead, he received this uninhibited act of lavishing love.

Jesus could've bragged about what happened with Lazarus. Show off Lazarus to the people who wanted to see Lazarus live and in person. He could've once again told Martha to please sit down and be with him.

Jesus did none of these things.

Just like my spiritual direction sessions, the many characters are welcomed by the true voice at the dinner party. My true self that is one with Spirit. Each one of these other voices need to be invited to the dinner party. Whether a silent voice or a challenging voice like Judas, they all are welcome to the party.

Like the voice of Jesus in the house of the dinner party, the divine voice within us needs to rise above the others with compassionate wisdom. The voice that saves us from all the egos jockeying for position.

In our contemplative moments, we can honor each one of those voices without giving them power. There are times we simply lavish gratitude to those voices for wanting to protect us. Thank them and focus on what is most important.

This is when we discover compassion as our companion as we encounter these different characters.

We can listen to the voice of self-sabotage, and it will tell us that it doesn't mean to be malicious. It's simply afraid and wants to protect me from the what ifs around the corner.

We can imitate the practices Jesus and Mary model for us at the dinner party.

Jesus graciously receiving the kindness of his host and his friend Mary. Being humbled by her passionate love that is beyond the value of expensive perfume.

I could instead listen to the Lazarus in me who has been resurrected and wants to put a positive spin on my death. "All things happen for a reason," he might say. "Remember I was dead but look! Here I am! Try to stay positive! All things work together for good.

Calm down Lazarus.

The Betrayal

There came a moment, however, when Judas attacked one of the other characters at the dinner party. He corrected them indirectly through the conversation with Jesus. Judas was out of line with what he said about Mary to Jesus. On the surface I can't argue with him. He makes a good point. Perhaps Judas is the judgmental manipulating voice in me that knows my weaknesses.

Judas knew Jesus soft spot was the poor. A perfect opportunity to justify his coming betrayal of Jesus.

I can relate to that part of myself. The judge of all things around me. The betrayer of my true self. Sometimes like Jesus I have to say, "leave her alone" when I encounter the betrayer in me.

Welcome to the dinner party! All voices and temperaments are welcome. But only one voice has the authority to define us. The only one who have the final say over all things.

Our contemplative practices are like pouring expensive perfume in the middle of our dinner party.

When confused about our dinner party voices we can be still and hear the voice of the Spirit saying to all, “leave her alone.” Let the fragrance of gratitude fill the room.

Now let us celebrate that voice that rises in loving compassion for all our other voices.

The dinner party where broken meets broken.

Amen

“Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not all His benefits” -Psalm 103:

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Song

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

Spirit Divine

(Keith Duke)

Spirit of Love, enfold and teach us.

Spirit of Peace, rest deep within

Spirit of change, transform and heal us

Spirit Divine

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God’s story touches our life story)

Healer of Our Every Ill

(Marty Haugen)

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow. Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope
beyond our sorrow.

You who know our fears and sadness. Grace us with your peace and gladness.

Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts. *Refrain*

In the pain and joy beholding, how your grace is still unfolding

Give us all your vision God of love. *Refrain*

The Meal
The Lord's Prayer
(Taize Reflections)

Benediction
A Celtic Blessing
(Margaret Rizza)

The guarding of the God of Life be on you, the guarding of loving Christ be on you,
the guarding of the Holy Spirit be on you, to aid and uphold you each day and night of your life.
The guarding of God, the guarding of Christ, the guarding of the Spirit be upon you.