

REFLECTION

by Rev. Jan Craig

at

Scarboro United Church

Sunday March 21, 2010

"In Memory of Her"

Scripture: Isaiah 43: 16-21

John 12: 1-8

Whew, it feels good to get out of there! I probably should have gone to help Martha in the kitchen but she would just be at me too, and I can't take much more of it. Oh sorry ... didn't see you there. I was just talking to myself. We are having quite the night in there. That's our house through the door ... I live there with my sister, Martha, and my brother, Lazarus. I'm Mary, by the way.

We have lived here forever it seems - I won't go into the long version but life has happened and we've all ended up back here in the home we grew up in, living together. Mostly it is wonderful and it is good to be together and good to be able to take care of one another this way. We have many friends and they meet and gather in our house. Some of them are part of the group that has gathered around Jesus - you've heard of him, haven't you? He is one of our best friends - he comes and stays with us whenever he is nearby and really, for us, he is like one of the family.

I know there is something very special about him - I recognize in his teachings the longings of my own heart. He is open to God and to God's path in a way that I long to be, and to be honest, it is a way that some are only mystified by. But if we all could only learn from him how to be that connected to God and to one another what a different world this would be.

Life has settled down for us and is usually very quiet. Jesus came back tonight for supper and it was to be a celebration. Martha was going all out because recently Jesus helped Lazarus find himself when he seemed to get lost in his soul. Lots of the other disciples and followers were there too. I don't know what got into me - I do these things and I know sometimes I don't really think, but they just seem like the right thing to do. Does that ever happen to you?

You just do something because you know you are supposed to ---- but sometimes it seems others don't always get it.

Well that sure goes for tonight. Anyway, just as supper was beginning I went and got the jar of spikenard that is mine (those are the spices we use for burial). They are very expensive. The cost of a jar is about the wages of a labourer for a year .so that's expensive. Anyway, the three of us have our jars saved for our deaths but I am the youngest and by the time I die Lazarus and Martha will be gone and it won't matter as much if good spices are used for me. There will be no one left for it to matter to and it doesn't matter to me. But I do care about Jesus and somehow tonight I just had the feeling that his end is near and I was to let the others know about it. I couldn't do it in words. They would never listen to me - a woman. I wouldn't be able to really explain it in a way they would hear but they might listen to my actions.

So I poured the nard on his feet. As a woman I only touch a man's feet after death so I poured on the spices of death and then somehow I just couldn't do it with my hands but my hair loosened and I wiped his feet with my hair. I can't even begin to explain why I did that. I know it was unusual.

Then Judas really got his knickers in a knot. He started in at me about what the money could have been used for, should have been used for. About how foolish I was. Others were agreeing - I know they were. But Jesus stopped them ... told them to leave me alone. Said something strange: that they would always have the poor with them but would not always have him. So Jesus did understand what I was about.

I think Jesus understood better than I did what I was doing. Sometimes that is the way it is. Those we love sometimes do understand us better than we understand ourselves. Sometimes God understands us better than we understand ourselves. Jesus knew that when I rubbed his feet with the nard that it was a significant act.

I was acting out his own anointing for burial. He knew that things were changing and that sometime in the future there was going to be danger ahead and his life was going to be at risk. And to act rather than talk was not all that strange because prophets have always acted out these kinds of things - look at the Old Testament. If I had anointed Jesus' head then people would have understood that he was to be King but I anointed his feet which is the way we anoint a corpse.

Judas and some of the others got upset because they didn't get it. They never really understand Jesus or his teachings. They never understand when he talks about eating with sinners, forgiving those who have harmed us, healing those who are hurt, offering love and friendship to those who are alone, being channels of God's love and wholeness to those who are most alone and opening doors when they are closed. Jesus always struggles because there are those who just cannot hear and at times I guess that is all of us. And always we struggle to follow Jesus way but mostly we try. I love him and I want others to know him and to love him too.

So I had to do it - that's all I can say and that's really all I know. My friend Jesus, our teacher Jesus, changed my life and the lives of my brother and my sister. He cast out my demons, my fears and anxieties and his words are life for me.

He told me to "Go and tell them." He said that to me, a woman. "Go and tell them!" And so I did in words and in my actions which you may not understand or believe. I just had to pour out the perfume over him - it was all I had that was worth something. He had given everything he had to us. He had taught me about giving my all for love and for others. I couldn't keep it for myself. He had taught me too well. For the truth is, beyond whatever devastating things happen to us, even beyond the grave, beyond whatever doors close in our faces and however hard they slam or are locked --- well the truth is there is life and love. The One who knows my story also knows your story too. I had to tell him that I understood. I had to tell him "thank you".

When you hear my story again, and you will, what will you remember?

What will you think about?

What will you do?

What precious thing will you pour out on account of him?

Amen